

# Elementary English

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FIRST GRADE

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

# Elementary ENGLISH

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# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

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## Creative Writing in a First Grade

LILLIAN SCOTT WILSON<sup>1</sup>

Some people raise their eyebrows at a suggestion of the possibility of creative writing at first grade level. They may be thinking superficially of the barrier raised by a lack of fluency in the mechanics of writing. How can a child write creatively before he can *write*?

Once I raised the same question, but I know now that creativity does not wait for techniques of expression to be developed. At six every child is creative. Any idea that is an outcome of his individual thinking process is creative expression for that child, even though that particular idea has been expressed by others many times previously. Each child will give it a fresh interpretation, colored by his individual experience. The effort of the teacher is to provide opportunity for the child to translate his own experiences into words, rather than to encourage trite repetition of the thoughts of others. Satisfaction that comes to the child, as a result of his creative expression, may be secured by providing an audience situation so that he may realize the joy of sharing his experiences with others, and by the teacher's taking down his dictation and reading back to him and the group his very thoughts, clothed in his own individual phrasing. Thus his creative product acquires dignity and importance in his own eyes and in the estimation

of his peers. Various teachers have given us excellent and detailed descriptions of methods used to encourage creative writing at the upper grade levels and in high school, where the success of the effort made may be measured in terms of the resulting product. But there seems to be much less help for the primary teacher who thinks it is important to direct the thinking in her room into creative channels.

*Importance of Creative Writing in First Grade.* Is creative writing important? Why not let creative writing wait until after the children have mastered the mechanics of handwriting and can record their own thoughts? Will not the necessity of verbalizing tend to stifle the flow of creative expression? Originality or creativity in thinking is an extremely personal matter, so will it not be much more difficult for a child to tell his thought to another, than for him to write it out privately on paper?

But it may be that one reason adolescent children are shy about expressing their own original thoughts is that they have seldom had the opportunity of expressing them freely to other people. This may be an acquired embarrassment, as is the child's

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approved modesty concerning his physical self. The pity is that there is no sociological justification for such shyness, and it need never be acquired if children are accustomed to the free and uninhibited expression of creative thought from the day they first come to school. Another and very important reason for incorporating creative expression as an integral part of the life of the children in the primary school is the democratic necessity of training small citizens in the ability to stand on their own feet intellectually and to arrive at their own decisions, instead of accepting ideas and attitudes which come from others,—and this training can not begin too early.

There are many limitations in creative writing at the first grade level which the teacher who aspires to encourage such activity must recognize and accept. The child's vocabulary is limited to his experiences, and he will possess a vast number of misconceptions about his environment. He will employ much repetition, partly because he likes repetition and partly because of his inexperience in expressing himself. His interest span will be short, and his thinking is apt to be a hop, skip and jump sort of affair. The teacher needs be on the lookout constantly for colorful phrasing tossed off by the child in an unexpected moment and for thoughts clothed in beautiful or amusing language, expressed as sudden insight comes to the child.

*Individual Stories.* At first the children in our room were shy about dictating stories of any length. In the midst of a Christmas story upon which we were working, Arnold, who had come into our group as a stranger and who had contributed little

previously, was inspired by our comparison of reindeer with horses to talk about a race horse of his grandfather's. He went on from that to tell about boat racing in the harbor near his grandfather's. This was an extension of experience for all the other children and they gave rapt attention, while I flipped over to another page in my notebook and wrote furiously, trying to get it recorded without slowing up his flow of words. We let the Christmas story go for the time being because we could come back to it later. But Arnold might not feel like telling us some other time.

In our group the most fruitful time in the day for creative writing appears to be when we are all sitting in a big circle for writing our daily newspaper, for sharing things we may bring from home, and for general conversation and planning. Usually several hands go up when I produce the pad upon which I take dictation. They understand that there is a difference between "really" stories and "made-up" ones, but we do not emphasize the difference. Interesting stories have appeared in either category. Occasionally a boy will come up to me on the playground, saying, "I have a story." I will hurriedly pull out my pad and take dictation. But most of the stories, and usually the best ones, are told when we are sitting in the circle and talking about stories.

Some children have a keen sense of climax in their stories. Early in the year Betty Mae was telling a factual story. She started out, "I went to bed one night and there was—" but she caught herself, deciding to keep her audience in suspense. She went on, "Daddy put the garbages on the porch because he didn't want to go



down alone, and I heard Mother say, 'Let's go get a broomstick!' And then she hit the thing that got up on the porch, and it jumped. *It was a possum!*" She is also adept at inserting clues in her stories, to be used in the denouement at the end.

Children at this age live in the world of their immediate environment; their imaginations do not stretch to far horizons, but tie all new experience in with the everyday world that they know. Bobby is a child in our group who has very meager imaginative gifts. Imagine my delight when he showed an inclination to extend space in this story, told after they had been shown a jungle picture on our school projector: "One time our dog went out and went over in the jungles and found a river that time. Then last year he had three little pups and they fell out in the snow." He made a valiant effort but could not maintain it; he came back to the here and now with a thump! The confusion concerning sex, found in this story, is typical of stories by children of this age.

One day the lights went off at school for half an hour, so when it came storytelling time Dick, whose hobby is trains, told this one: "A man was in a train and the lights went out, and they said, 'Who turned the lights out?' And he went up to another man who was sleeping and asked him, and he said, 'No.' He went to all the beds and asked them, and they all said, 'No.' And he was expecting someone to say, 'Yes.'" Dick thought that was the end of his story and stopped there, but the children all protested, so he continued, "He tried to put on the lights, and they wouldn't go on. He went up to the engineer to find out if he could find a fuse,

but he couldn't. And he asked the conductor, but he couldn't. And he asked the porter, but he couldn't. And he asked the train man, but he couldn't. So he went back to bed." This ending, strangely enough, satisfied everybody. The listeners loved the repetition in this story.

Just after our local fair had induced great interest and excitement in the group, Major, a boy who had come to us from a large city, produced this example of pure literary surrealism: "There was a fair that never had happened to me till January fifth. The prices went up on the merry-go-round and it would never have happened if it didn't blast into rock, but it did. It was a contest, and I rode on a pony and I whipped the pony, and it had a saddle and harness on. It would be dead if it didn't have a saddle and harness on—and a coat."

I read the stories back to the children on later days and it is a thrilling experience for them to recognize their words coming back to them. As they hear the stories told and re-read they come to sense the fact that some stories are more interesting than others. We have talked a little, as their interest held, about using interesting words, choosing interesting events, and building up to a climax. But a little analysis goes a long way with them. Having no tested rules to follow in the development of creative writing, we have been free to try out every new way of doing that presented itself. As a result all degrees of group composition have appeared from time to time, ranging from those that start with the individual to the writing which is completely a community effort.

*Beginning of Group Efforts.* After recess one day the girls came into the room

before the boys got there, and the Weekly Readers lying on the tables caught their eyes and attention. Noticing a picture of the dog and cat asleep in the sunshine, Barbara and Sandra stumbled on the rhyme of "light" and "night" and came up with:

"Bibs and Pal sleep in the light;  
Boys and girls sleep in the night.  
"Listen, Mrs. Wilson! It rhymes!"

One night after school while a dozen children were waiting for the bus, Jimmy was sing-singing, half to himself and half to me, "I want to go begging on Halloween night." He liked the lilt of the sentence, and kept repeating it for the pleasure of the sound. I suggested, "Why don't you go on and make a poem? What would rhyme with 'night'?" He was quick to offer rhyming words, and the other children all became interested and helped out toward the end, with this result:

"I want to go begging on Halloween  
night;  
I'm gonta dress up and look like a  
sight;  
I'll go to my neighbors and give them  
a fright.  
"If my neighbors are home, I'll walk  
in their house;  
I'll stoop down and tiptoe as soft as  
a mouse;  
I'll go in the kitchen and eat all their  
souse."

They labored to bring forth that last line! Everyone in the room was saying words that rhymed with "house" and "mouse". Finally Bobby said that "souse" is a meat to eat and it is sour, so they decided to use it. They were fascinated by the

new word. Since Jimmy had started this and felt that it was his own personal product, he took it upon himself—and the others conceded to him the right—to make the decisions. But everybody had a part in it, and everybody benefited.

*Group Poems.* On another day I introduced the idea of a group poem by asking them to recall all the things we think of when someone says, "Halloween"—in the stories we had heard, in the songs we had sung, in the pictures we had drawn and painted, in the activities we were planning. Suggestions came from them in a torrent, so that every word of the poem was dictated as I wrote it down on the blackboard. The only part I had in the actual composition was that of selection, and I deferred to their choice even in that. They set the meter in the first line and, in order to maintain that rhythm, I re-read all the lines they had previously dictated, each time, so that they would unconsciously phrase their suggestions in that same rhythm. This is what appeared:

#### "Halloween"

"Pumpkin faces—jack o'lanterns;  
Soap the windows—run away!  
Corn and beans on people's porches,  
Begging at the neighbors' houses,  
Jack o'lanterns in the windows,  
Sticking tooth-picks in the door-bells,  
Funny witches on their broom-sticks,  
Brownies, owls, and big black cats—  
This is Halloween."

They were beginning to tire of it by the time we reached the eighth line, ran out of phrases, and just lumped things together. Hoping to draw from them a concluding line, I then asked, "Now is this what you think Halloween is?" And I re-

read the eight lines. But instead of phrasing a conclusion in the rhythmic pattern we had been using, Wayne said, in the tone of voice which I recognized as the one he uses when dictating, "This is Halloween." I hesitated for a disapproving instant, then in a flash realized that his sentence made a better ending than a longer one which I had had in mind.

They enjoyed group composition and some of the children, who had not ventured to do any creative work individually, felt that they had a part in this kind of production. So at the approach of Thanksgiving, while we were in the midst of talking about all the phases of this celebration, I suggested that we do a Thanksgiving poem. Having in mind the blank verse, inventory type of poem that we had done previously, I asked them to name the things for which we are thankful. Barbara instantly dictated, "We're thankful for the flowers." Since this was November, I asked, "What flowers?" "The ones we planted in the spring," she explained very positively, in her bouncy way, and dictated,

"We're thankful for the flowers  
We planted in the spring."

So I had to write it on the board, and I saw that it was very plainly demanding a rhyme. When I asked for other items to add to our list, "food" and "clothes" came quickly, and Arnold, throwing out his hands in a characteristic gesture, laughed and said, "Just everything." I wrote quickly, for here had come our rhyme without conscious intention on anyone's part:

"We're thankful for our food,  
Our clothes, and everything."

In talking about the season's feast I had previously tried to get the children to list a complete menu, but their interest always seemed to remain with the meat dishes, of which they were ever eager to make a long list. So I was not surprised when that came along next, but I halted them when we had enough for two lines:

"We're thankful for the turkeys,  
And chickens, and the ducks."

I re-read the poem so far and pointed out that we need something to rhyme with "ducks." Sandra immediately suggested "trucks."

"What trucks?" I asked.

"Like the one the heifer was in," she replied, and several voices chimed in, "When we sent things to the children in Europe."

Our children had brought contributions to buy a heifer to send to the European children, and some men had brought the heifer down to the school yard in a truck, so they could see it. We had made a chart story about how many different ways it would have to travel to get to Europe—by train and boat, as well as by truck. Due to poetic exigencies we omitted the other means of transportation, and they finally agreed on,

"We're thankful we can send things  
To children in the trucks."

They all had Pilgrims on their minds and of course had to include them:

"We're thankful for the Pilgrims"

The next line started out, "Who came by boat—" but they stuck there, and could not finish it. Marilyn tried, "Who came across the river," but others said no, it was

the "ocean." They perceived that "ocean" was too long a word to fit in, and there were cries of "sea" from both sides of the room, so it became,

"Who came across the sea"

Jack suggested the next line quickly,

"To make the first Thanksgiving"

Here Sandra persisted in trying to make the last line rhyme with "Thanksgiving." Some of the others understood that it must rhyme with "sea," and she at last suggested that "me" or "she" or "he" would rhyme. My suggestion, among others, "Would you like to tell, here, whom Thanksgiving was for?" brought "Indians" first, then Nanci-Jo said, "For everyone," and Sandra roguishly added, "For me!" discarding the other two pronouns, and we had it:

"For everyone—and me!"

I kept trying unobtrusively to get them to include some abstract things for which they were thankful, like mother love, or beauty of the snow. I had also hoped they might include some very concrete personal things, such as the big blocks we have in the room, or zippers, but their ideas were much too general to get down to cases. Another group of children might be more interested in those things. . . . I find that groups of children have variously different personalities just as individuals have.

*Collaboration of Teacher and Children.* One morning there was an extremely dense fog surrounding the school house until almost noon. Just as it was clearing away the children spied two squirrels, running about in the walnut tree outside our window and knocking nuts off into the leaves below. We ceased our activities

momentarily, to stand up and watch them for a while. That evening at home I wrote a story about two squirrels, Frisky and Whiskers, who lived near the school house, telling about their impressions of the fog, about their mother's sending them out to get the walnuts, and about their noticing the children looking out the window and their wondering what the children were looking at. Our boys and girls were delighted to discover themselves in a story, when I read it to them the next day, and demanded many subsequent re-readings.

This experience prompted me to suggest that the children help in the writing of a story. It did not seem feasible to have them dictate it verbatim as we had done in the case of a group poem or a short individual story. There was danger that dictation might slow up the action so much that they would lose interest. So we started out experimentally, ready to use any method that would appear workable as we went along. I had been keeping my eyes open for an opportunity that would provide story material. I had considered, briefly, our doing a story about the children on the Mayflower, but that did not seem real enough to them. Later I believed they could find their way around adequately enough in the realm of Santa Claus, so one morning when we had been hearing a Christmas story read from a book, I suggested, "Why couldn't we write a story about Santa Claus, ourselves? Would you like to?" After a second of surprised silence, they were entranced with the idea and immediately became so vociferous that they had to back up and start over, letting one person talk at a time in order to be heard.

We talked about the preparations



Santa would have to make for his Christmas trip in the sleigh. The children decided that he would have to get a good sleep beforehand in order to stay up all night, and he would have to feed and harness the reindeer. They even brought up the idea of currying and brushing them—and everyone agreed that their horns would have to be washed!

I pointed out to them that to have a good story something has to go wrong, and we must think up a way to fix it. So they suggested that Santa might think one of the reindeer was sick, or that it had a broken leg. What would he do? They finally decided that the reindeer, which Santa thought was sick, really had a baby reindeer. (We had just read a story about a cat that had kittens.)

"Would she be able to go and help pull Santa's sleigh?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" they exclaimed, almost in unison. "She would have to stay home with the baby."

Someone suggested that they might put the baby in the sleigh and take it along, but that possibility was overruled because there would not be enough room with all the toys.

They knew Santa has eight reindeer so Barbara got eight boys and girls to stand up in pairs and go around the circle as if they were pulling the sleigh. Then she took one of them out for the reindeer that had the baby, and they saw that the pairs were spoiled. They thought maybe the one single deer could be hitched in the center in front as a leader, but Dennis, a country boy, declared that the harness would not fit that kind of a hitch. Betty Mae suggested

that Santa might go somewhere to get another reindeer to fill in. But he would hardly have time to do that at the last minute, and maybe he could not find one, and it would not be used to going with the others. Finally someone suggested that *another* reindeer might have a baby. Then they would be in pairs, but there would be only six of them to pull the sleigh. So Santa Claus would have to talk to them and tell them they would have to work very hard to do the work of eight reindeer. This seemed to be enough of a framework upon which to build a story, so we started writing it.

They decided the story would begin when Santa had finished his big sleep and was ready to go out and see his reindeer. As the story went down on paper the children would tell what happened next. They often spoke in phrases or very short sentences which I used in longer sentences, submitting each one for their approval or revision before writing it down. They were full of ideas and suggestions, and not at all hesitant about amending or adding to my efforts. In this way the story moved along fast enough to hold their interest. As the days passed and the story progressed, the children dictated more and more freely. I have tried to put in italics the parts of the story which the children dictated verbatim, but they had so much to do with all of it that it was difficult to select the parts which were completely theirs.

#### *Why Santa Took Six Reindeer*

"Ho, ho, ho!" yawned Santa Claus, as he stretched *his big strong arms*. He had been sleeping so that he would be wide awake to take his long trip on Christmas Eve.

Mrs. Santa had a good dinner almost ready and she was *packing some sandwiches for him to take with him*, in case the children forgot to put out food.

"You'd better hurry out and get those reindeer fed," she reminded him.

So Santa wrapped up snugly in *his big red coat, big black boots, his big belt, big red cap, and his scarf* and tramped out through the snow to the barn. When he opened the big doors it was *warm inside and smelled like reindeer*.

He heard a *whinny* from Vixen's stall that meant he was hungry. So Santa hurried and stuck his pitchfork in the haypile to give the reindeer some hay. When he went to put Vixen's hay in his manger he glanced over at Prancer's stall, and it was empty! So he opened the stall door to see what was the matter, and there was Prancer *lying down, letting a baby reindeer get some milk*.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Santa, in surprise. "*What have you got, Prancer? You'll have to stay home with your baby tonight. Now what can I do?*"

Santa Claus was worried because the reindeer *had to have partners. The harness was made that way*.

He went on feeding the rest of the reindeer. Dancer's stall was the last one down at the end, and it was dark down there. Dunder's stall was next to it and, when Santa was putting hay in there, he noticed that *Dancer's antlers were not sticking out*, as they were when she was waiting to be fed. He opened the stall door, but it was so dark in there that *he had to go back to the house to get his flashlight. He was worried for fear Dancer had*

*broken a leg or had died, so he hurried*. When he turned the flashlight on inside the stall, he almost stumbled over Dancer's foot, because he was looking at something else.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "*Another baby! That wasn't what I thought!*" And he laughed a big Santa Claus laugh.

"I guess I'll have to take just six reindeer," he explained to himself. Then he said very loud so the other reindeer could hear, "*You'll have to work very hard, because Prancer and Dancer have babies so they can't go tonight. But I'll have ten reindeer when the babies grow up, and then you won't have to work so hard.*"

At least Santa Claus felt good because he had pairs of reindeer to drive, and he could still use his harness. He could just unhook two of them.

Santa got his big brush and curry comb and brushed the reindeer off, and washed their horns, and put on the harness ready to go, and hooked them up to the sleigh. He tied them outside the house while he got the bells and the lantern and ate his dinner. He was so excited that he almost forgot to put the toys in. But he finally got them all packed in and off he went with only six reindeer.

He called, "*Giddyap, reindeer! Good-by, Mrs. Santa Claus!*"

This is one of the most successful of the experimental techniques that I have developed in searching for methods of opening up ways of expression in creative writing by primary children. I had thought we might do a valentine story in this manner, but no opportunity arose until the morning of Valentine Day.

Sandra began an individual story: "This little girl said, 'Today is Valentine Day. I have to get all my valentines sent.'"

"'Golly Neds,' said her mother. 'You'll have to get them all ready if you want to send them. It's probably too late now; the mail man has left.'"

Then she bogged down. She looked helplessly around, smiled weakly, and did not quite know what to have happen next. This looked like our chance, so I suggested, "Do you want to help Sandra out with her story? What is the little girl's name? What might she do with her valentines, if she could not send them as she had planned? *What will she do right now?* . . . The mail man has gone without her valentines, and there is no other way to send them'."

They decided to name her Jane. So Jane began to cry, and the door bell was rung, "Dingle, dingle, dingle," by a little boy with dirty hands who was valentineless, and away went the story, propelled by thirty eager tongues.

They were evidently impressed with the idea that in a story something must go wrong. So now at the conclusion, as the little boy was about to go happily home with the valentines and the shortening for which he had come borrowing, Penny wanted him to discover that he had forgotten to bring a pan in which to carry the shortening, so that the story could go on—and on—like the radio soap operas, I suppose. This story had gone along pretty fast, but was laid aside at recess time when their interest was beginning to flag. Then they started in again after the intermission and finished it quickly, although there were several, like Penny, who did not want to stop. I sensed that they felt as if they

had just made the acquaintance of Jane and Donny that morning, and were reluctant to let them go so soon. This prompted our intention to do another story about the same characters later. . . . It might even run into a whole series. New techniques keep suggesting other and different ways of doing.

*Conclusion.* With any breaking of precedent or initiation of new projects, fear and lack of self-confidence tend to confuse the situation and increase apparent difficulties. This hesitancy is especially true in the case of a teacher planning to introduce creative writing at the first grade level. To secure creative writing from children she does not have to be a professional writer herself; all she has to do is to provide a relaxed atmosphere in the room, let herself go with the children, and then recognize all of the modes of expression that children actually use, and build on them by providing opportunities for practice. Methods of approach will vary from day to day, as new interests develop in the room, and as the children's avid curiosity reaches out into the world about them. The teacher's mind, when kept open and alert, will catch suggestions offered by the children themselves and by the interaction of the children and the environment. Above all, the children's joy in the process will match the teacher's pleasure in their doing, and the two will mutually stimulate each other.

Evaluating creative writing in the first grade is difficult and uncertain because the emphasis is on the emerging personalities. I had thought, when I feared to make the beginning, that the creative products of

(Continued on Page 264)

# Techniques for Selecting and Writing Readable Materials

EDGAR DALE AND JEANNE S. CHALL<sup>1</sup>

The previous articles in this series have considered the factors which affect the readability of printed material. This chapter shows how teachers, librarians, and community leaders can use readability research to select reading materials for specific readers. We shall also outline some techniques that writers and editors can use in writing readable materials.

The techniques which follow are based on the concept of readability proposed by the writers in their previous article:

In the broadest sense, readability is the sum total (including the interactions) of all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affect the success a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimum speed, and find it interesting. (3, p. 23)

We are not concerned here with the important questions of content. Whether or not more emphasis should be placed on colonial times in a fifth grade American history textbook, or whether high school civics texts should put more or less emphasis on youth volunteer service, are not readability problems. But the way these topics are presented so that they may be read with optimal interest, understanding, and speed is a very important problem in readability.

Some persons object to readability analyses and suggestions for writing readable materials. They say that writing is an art. We agree with them. But we also be-

lieve that art is helped by the use of related science.

Some teachers and librarians strongly favor an entirely individualized reading program. Since children within any grade have different reading abilities and interests, material that is readable for one child may not be readable for his classmate. They suggest, therefore, that the problem of readability can be solved by supplying a wide variety of materials so that every child can select what is "readable for him."

However, even if we were to accept completely the philosophy of "to each his own criterion of readability," someone must still select the history text, the basic reader, the geography book, etc. And even when a wide variety of materials is available for each class, these materials must be selected to meet the abilities and interests of the children in the class.

How are such selections to be made so that they can be read? What objective standards should the teacher, librarian, or group leader use to select or recommend books that will fit the abilities and interests of the group? How should a 6th grade science book be written so that sixth graders will profit from it? Here the re-

<sup>1</sup>Members of the faculty of the School of Education, Ohio State University. This is the final article in a series of five prepared under the general editorship of Dr. Edgar Dale, who is chairman of a committee of the National Conference on Research in English, which sponsored the series.



search findings in readability can help those who select, recommend, or write reading materials.

One more caution: the last word has not yet been said about readability. We have objectively analyzed only a few of the factors influencing readability. The other factors should be considered, if only for the purpose of subjective evaluation.

In selecting and writing readable materials we consider three questions:

1. Who will read the material?
2. What is the purpose of the material?
3. Does the material fit the readers and the purpose?

The first question seems elementary, but it is not so simple. If it were, we would not be able to cite such illustrations as the following. This is the concluding paragraph of a booklet on cancer written specifically for children in grades 5 and 6:

Take pains to prevent *chronic irritations* to any part of the body. This should include protection from over-exposure to sun and wind, repair of jagged teeth, avoiding *ill-fitting dental plates*, *temperance in the use of tobacco*, *correction of chronic constipation*. In other words, avoid unnecessary abuse of any *tissues*. (italics ours)

Even if 5th and 6th graders knew what *temperance*, *chronic irritations*, and *chronic constipation* meant, of what interest value is it to give them information about *ill-fitting dental plates*? Such examples can be multiplied.

The important thing to remember is that answering the simple question of "Who will read the material?" involves a knowledge of many characteristics of the

prospective readers. These characteristics include: reading abilities, interests, age, sex, intellectual maturity, background of information, etc.

The larger the group of readers, the harder it is to get a clear picture of these characteristics.

It is harder, too, to determine the characteristics of readers as their age increases. It is harder to get a picture of the *who* when we select or write for high school pupils than for elementary pupils. It is harder still for members of an adult education class, and still harder when we write or select materials for the "general adult" reader. Differences in reading ability, experience, interest, and intellectual maturity tend to become greater as the average age of the group increases.

### *Defining the Audience*

Teachers, librarians, community leaders, and authors can use the techniques suggested in the following outline to help them judge some important characteristics of the readers for whom materials are being selected or written.

#### 1. How well does the group read?

- Children:
1. Give a standardized reading test to the group. Change the scores into reading grades. Note the wide variation in grade scores.
  2. Compute the average reading grade for the class. Also note those children at the upper and lower limits so that special materials of appropriate difficulty can be provided for them.
  3. Use informal reading tests such as word-recognition tests and observe children's performance on books of known reading difficulty.

- Adults:
- 1: When a reading test can be given, as in an adult education class, obtain the average and range of scores.
  2. When a reading test cannot be given, use the last grade of formal schooling as an estimate of reading ability. Average these for the group and note those at the extremes who may need special materials.
  3. When selecting or writing materials for a large heterogeneous group such as parents of children in school, or for the "average adult" in a community, consult the census data on the "Percentage of Persons 25 years old and over by years of school completed," in the 1940 Population, Vol. II, *Characteristics of the Population*. Part I contains the statistics for the U. S. as a whole, and Parts 2 to 7 give the statistics for states, cities, and counties. These are further broken down by sex, race, native and foreign born, urban and rural.

2. What are the reading interests, habits, and tastes of the group?

- Children:
1. In general, be familiar with the major changes in reading interests as children proceed through the primary, middle grades, and high school level. See Witty (33) for a review of important studies.
  2. More specifically, be familiar with the findings of the studies on reading interests of the major age groups. The literature is voluminous but the following may be a good start:

Elementary school:

General reading interests—Witty (33) for a review of findings of

important studies. See also Gates (11), Lazar (15), Thorndike (28), Rankin (26).

Reading interests in special fields—Von Qualen (29) and Williams (32) for children's interests in science, Kyte (13) for children's interests in poetry.

High School:

General reading interests—Witty (33), LaBrant and Heller (14), Zeller (35), Sterner (27). Reading interests in special fields—47th NSSE Yearbook (23), Gray (12).

3. Judge the interests of your own group through informal discussions, questionnaires, etc.

- Adults:
1. Consult studies on adult interests. A study of Waples and Tyler (30) is a good way to begin. Besides giving some major interests of specific adult groups, they propose a scheme for discovering reading interests. See also recent studies of adult reading habits—Link and Hopf (16), and the National Opinion Research Center's Study for the American Library Association (22).
  2. In addition, make inquiries of your own to find out what the group does with its spare time, what books and magazines they like to read, etc. Draw up a simple questionnaire or use informal discussions.

3. How much does the group already know about what they are to read?

This question tries to get at the information or misinformation that readers al-

ready have on a particular subject. Some estimate of their present information will help determine whether the material under consideration is too elementary or too advanced. Readers' knowledge of a subject usually indicates their interest in a subject. That is, the more the readers already know about the subject, the more interested they will probably be in it. This question is particularly important in selecting and writing expository material.

- Children: 1. At the lowest grades, we usually assume a minimum of knowledge on most subjects and start from "scratch," building up important concepts. However, even here there is a tendency to introduce unknown abstractions. See Ordan and Lorge (25) on children's social concepts.
2. If possible, give a short test or hold discussions to find out whether the children understand some of the basic concepts upon which the book is based. Record the results. When in doubt, assume that the information is not known.

- Adults: 1. Information surveys run by public opinion polling groups provide valuable hints of adults' information and misinformation on many social issues. (See *The Public Opinion Quarterly's* regular reviews of all available results of polls in the United States.)
2. Information on most subjects is positively related to socioeconomic level, occupational status, and educational achievement. Thus, if we are writing a pamphlet on the UN for unskilled workers, we would assume that they know less about the UN than a group of foremen.
3. If material is for an adult education class, a formal test

or an informal discussion can be held to determine their knowledge of necessary basic concepts. There is always a danger that we will overestimate the readers' information and underestimate their intelligence.

The above breakdowns for defining the audience are not complete. They help the teacher, librarian, group leader, and writer become aware of the variety of characteristics to be considered in describing an audience to provide them with suitable materials.

### *Defining the Purpose*

The question, "What is the purpose of the material?" must also be answered before any selecting or writing is begun.

Here we must face such questions as these:

1. Is the material to serve as a broad orientation to the field or is it to be studied in detail?
2. Is the purpose of the material to communicate definite steps to action or is it to change attitudes, supply information, teach appreciation? Or is it designed to do a combination of these?
3. Is the book to be read without help from the teacher?
4. Is the reading material to be required or merely recommended?
5. Is the book to be used as a text for the entire class? Will other books or materials be available?

Of course, the purpose cannot be defined by the teacher alone. It depends upon the broad and specific objectives of the curriculum, the financial condition of the particular school, and the availability of materials on particular subjects. It also depends upon the reader's specific purpose in reading. He may be reading for entertainment, for getting answers to specific ques-

tions, for solving problems, for specific directions for doing something, etc. However, answers to the above questions in terms of readability provide some standards against which materials can be evaluated.

For example, a book to be read without the teacher's help, should be easier than one which is to be studied in class. When only one textbook is used in geography, that book should be within the comprehension of *most* of the class. We use the word *most* rather than *all* because there may well be a few extremely poor readers in the class who might have difficulty even with the simplest book. Books that are to be read for general import and appreciation can be harder than those read for detailed information.

### *Analyzing the Material*

Once we have answered the questions of "Who is going to read the material?" and "What is the purpose?", we can proceed to the third question, "Does the material fit the readers and the purpose?"

At this stage, however, it is best to treat the selection and writing of materials separately. First, we shall take the selection of materials already written.

#### 1. How difficult is the material?

A readability formula can be used to get a rough estimate of the difficulty of a book, pamphlet or article. However, we must realize that the available formulas measure only one aspect of difficulty—expressional or structural difficulty. Only such factors as vocabulary and sentence structure are measured. The readability formulas do not directly measure conceptual difficulty, organization of the material,

abstractness of subject matter—all known to affect comprehensibility. Results from formulas should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

For a more comprehensive discussion of the uses and limitations of readability formulas, see the second article in this series by Dr. Lorge (19).

The following outline suggests the formulas that will be most useful for estimating the difficulty of different kinds of materials.

- Children:
1. For estimating the difficulty of children's voluntary reading the Washburne-Morphett formula can be used (31). In the *Right Book for the Right Child* over 1000 books known to be liked by children and having literary value have already been graded in difficulty (1).
  2. The Lorge formula can be used to estimate the comprehension difficulty of the kind of reading pupils do in school (18).
  3. To estimate the difficulty of texts planned for children below the fourth or fifth grade, Lorge (19) suggests a weighted index of vocabulary load. See Yoakum (17), Dolch (6 and 7). See MacLachy (20) for estimating difficulty of preprimers.

- Adults:
1. Flesch (9) and Dale-Chall (13) formulas will give adequate estimates of difficulty of most materials. For specific subject matter areas, see Ojemann (24) for estimating difficulty of parent education materials and Dale-Chall for health materials.
  2. Books for adult beginners have recently been graded in difficulty by Fihe and others (10).



Note: Book lists for the different grades and age groups are published regularly. In addition, publishers give estimates of the grade placements of their books. Before these estimates are accepted, make certain that you know on what basis the books have been "graded."

2. Is the material suitable in difficulty for the readers?

An answer to this question depends not only upon the predicted difficulty of the material and the abilities of the readers, but also upon the purpose served by the material.

Suppose we are selecting a reading text for a 5th grade class. The reading abilities, according to an adequate reading test, may range from 3rd grade through the 8th grade, with an average of about 5. The textbook being considered has a readability index by the Lorge formula of 5.2. Is this suitable for the class in terms of comprehensibility? The answer is yes and no. Yes, if we are concerned with only the upper half of the class, who will be able to read it with ease and understanding. No, because it may be too hard for the lower half.

If this is the only text to be used, we must decide whether it should not actually be easier than 5.2. Perhaps 4.5 or 4.0 would be better so that many more children in the class will have success with it.

If we do select a text that is a half or full grade below the average reading ability of the group, will this cut off the better readers? Will they find the book unchallenging? Will it retard their progress in reading? We believe not. The better readers can and do read material

below their grade level with interest and profit. The teacher can assure their progress in reading by making available or recommending other more difficult material.

The children who read several grades below the class average are a greater problem. Even if the basic text is a half or full grade below the class reading level, it will be too difficult for them. The teacher must provide them with other materials that they can read without frustration.

In the subject matter areas, selecting a book that will be within the comprehension of the lower half of the class is even more important. Since our chief purpose is to impart information, rather than to give practice in reading, we must make certain that no unnecessary difficulties keep the less able readers from learning their history, geography, and science.

In selecting materials for adults, we have a similar problem. What level of difficulty will fit most readers and yet be challenging enough for the more able? If there is a choice between two books that cover the same subject, we would select the easier version if it is well written. It will not only be appreciated by the less able readers but will not be resented by the abler readers.

We found this to be true in interviewing readers' reactions to the National Tuberculosis Association booklet *Your Baby*. This booklet was at the 7-8th grade level by the Dale-Chall formula. We found that mothers who had graduated from college liked it as much as those who had not gone beyond the 7th grade. This indicates that material does not have to be at the grade level of the particular readers. In fact, even

for children, we must be flexible in our interpretation of the formula grade placements. Because we find a book readable at the 5th or 6th grade level, it does not mean that 8th graders will not enjoy it and profit from it. Actually interpreting readability scores as grade levels may be misleading. A grade level of 7 or 8 may merely mean that the material is clear, concrete, and skillfully written—not that it is child-like in its subject-matter and approach.

Thus far, we have discussed two questions regarding reading materials: "How difficult is the material?" and "Is the material suitable in difficulty for the readers?" We shall now discuss the questions of interest, organization, and typography.

3. Will the material be interesting to the readers?

For children in the primary grades, the interest value of the subject matter and the treatment must be studied. Books should be evaluated in the light of the research findings on children's reading interests. The specific interests of the readers for whom the selection is being made must also be considered.

For subject matter materials, the curriculum determines the content. We do not usually ask whether children in the 4th grade will be interested in reading about Columbus or about Colonial times. However, we can ask whether they will find the treatment of this particular information interesting.

At any rate, we should estimate readers' interests in both subject matter and treatment. If we have to say, "They really aren't interested in the agricultural products of Australia," then the treatment will

have to carry the burden of creating interest.

An oversimplified rule is: the more the geography book relates Australian agriculture and industry to the children's lives, the more concrete the treatment, the more personalized the approach, the more interesting they will find it.

4. Is the material well organized?

We do not yet have objective tools by which to answer this question but the reader can estimate it. In a sense good organization implies that one idea leads into the next. There is a building up of sequence, then the tying together in the conclusion. Well-organized material, whether narrative or expository, has a good flow and ordering of ideas.

5. Is the typography adequate for optimum speed of reading and interest?

Are the visual illustrations (pictures, charts, etc.) relevant? Are they adequately captioned and sufficiently explained in the textual material? Is the general appearance of the book or pamphlet attractive and suitable for the content and treatment?

For judging the adequacy of typography, see the previous article by Dr. Burt (2). Recently Malter (21) reviewed significant findings on children's preferences of drawings and pictures.

#### *Writing Readable Materials*

The problem of writing readable materials varies so much with the subject matter written about, the age or grade written for, and the purpose of the material, that we shall present here only some general suggestions for attacking the problem.

First, the writer must know for whom he is writing. He must also have a clear idea of what he is trying to get across. Then, if he can picture one or two typical readers, and tell his "message" to them, he will have a better chance of making himself understood and interesting.

The suggestions by Flesch in the *Art of Plain Talk* (8) and by Dale and Hager in their recent article, "How to Write to Be Understood" (5) should be helpful to writers. The article by Dale and Hager is particularly applicable to the writing of technical materials.

In preparing the first draft, the writer should not be distracted by word lists, sentence length, prepositional phrases. He should "tell his story," keeping in mind the need to be understood by the majority of the audience for whom he is writing. After the first draft, he can evaluate what he has written by using some of the techniques outlined above in *Analyzing the Material*. He can then revise in light of the interests, abilities, and intellectual maturity of his prospective readers.

### Summary

Under the three questions: "Who will read the material?" "What is the purpose?" and "Does the material fit the readers and the purpose?" we have suggested some techniques for selecting and writing readable materials.

Before a teacher, librarian, or group leader analyzes material to find whether it is readable, he must have a clear picture of the characteristics of his readers and the purpose which the material will serve. An author who wishes to write readable materials, must also know his audience and

the purpose of the material. We have therefore suggested some procedures which the teacher or writer can use to define his audience and purpose. We have also referred the reader to publications which will help him analyze materials to find whether they fit his readers' abilities, interests, and intellectual maturity.

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# What is the Listening Ratio in Your Classroom?

MIRIAM E. WILT<sup>1</sup>

Do you talk too much in school?

Yes No

Do you listen more than you talk during a school day?

Yes No

Do you stimulate children to speak more than a single word or thought in response to a question?

Yes No

Are your questions so thought provoking that your question time is less than the answer time?

Yes No

Do children in class discussion follow each other spontaneously without directing each comment to you?

Yes No

Is what you expect students to listen to worth hearing when you consider their needs, purposes, and interests?

Yes No

Is the purpose of each listening activity understood by all the students?

Yes No

Do your classroom environment and activities promote purposeful listening?

Yes No

Do you evaluate the quality of listening by observing changes in pupil behavior, habits, attitudes, and ideals?

Yes No

Do you teach good listening habits in all classroom activities?

Yes No

If you can answer "Yes" to these questions, read no more. If they make you think, if they make you begin to ponder about your classroom practices, if they disturb you at all, perhaps the listening ratio in your classroom is below par.

Listening is an important activity in every school room, in every school day. Children spend a large part of their time listening. They listen actively; they listen passively. They listen for pleasure and for information. Sometimes they listen simply because they think the teacher expects them to. The way they live is often related to how well they listen. What they say and

do, how they think, what their attitudes are toward people, ideas, and things, may be partially dependent upon what they hear and how effectively it becomes a part of their respective personalities.

From the beginning, American schools have taught boys and girls to read and write. For many years it was assumed, falsely we believe, that speaking and listening were learned without actual teaching. More recently, when it was discovered that maturing individuals were not proficient in speaking, the schools have put some

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emphasis upon this aspect of the language arts program. Today we are concerned about the kind of listeners the schools are producing. We are becoming increasingly aware of the responsibility of the schools for helping to develop intelligent listeners.

The four skills of communication, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, are essential for full rich living. Lack of skill in any one phase of communication may be a handicap throughout life. Thus skill in listening, or being able to receive communication through the ears, must take its place with reading, and with the skills of communicating to others through writing and speech.

### *The Teacher Speaks*

Teachers are saying, "I talk too much; I know I talk too much. And yet. . . .". And they go on talking.

What a shock it would be for most of us if we were to hear a recording of our teaching for one day. How many unnecessary words we use. How often we repeat directions, questions—yes even the answers the children have given. We decry the fact that there are so few true audience situations in which students may have functional practice in oral reading, and yet we read what they might read. We ask questions that might come from them, tell page numbers, explain processes and report on news events. Who needs this practice in speaking? Do we, or do the children need it more? Who needs practice in listening to whom?

To whom children listen is as important as to what they listen. If practice in listening to adults assured mastery of listening then no child in our public schools would be a failure. Unfortunately not only

has this kind of drill failed to promote learning through listening to adults, but has also failed to teach pupils how to learn from each other. Knowing how to listen to peers is as important as listening to adults, if not more so. As long as teachers frown upon communication between individuals, it is most unlikely that students will gain respect for what the peer group has to say. Present practices have encouraged students in thinking that the only worthwhile things being said are being said by the teachers.

Are we, as teachers, taking more time for talking than we should? Have we forgotten that the teacher is but one in a group of thirty or more enthusiastic people waiting for a chance to speak? If, as some of us know, teachers are talking more than half of the time in the school day, are we being fair? So little time remains for eager children to talk, to read, and to discuss. We have done an excellent job of shutting off this spontaneous flow of child language by our insistence on the importance of what we have to say. What they have to say is important, too, perhaps more important than we think.

We are not only responsible for what is to be said, but also for who shall say it. The needs of the individuals in the group will determine who are to be the listeners and who is to be the speaker. Our responsibility for developing the ability to listen actively, to speak effectively, to learn to listen to adults, as well as to peers is not an easy one.

We need to ask ourselves:

Is what I have to say more important than the student's need to learn how to speak?

Could more effective learning take place if the student were to hear an idea from his peers?

Is this the kind of a contribution that is more effective when it comes from the teacher?

What kind of listening experiences do these students need?

But there are words to be spoken that we teachers should say, and words to be read that we should read. Let us remember that we are group members and our contributions have value, too. The value of our contributions may be enhanced if we are willing to give way to the group when their need is greater. We may still share our choice bits of prose and poetry, ask the question that will help clarify thinking, give the item of information that our pupils have failed to discover and invite their participation in summarizing and drawing conclusions.

Could it be that what we say will be more significant if we don't talk all the time? Shouldn't we share those thoughts, facts, and ideas which we alone can share? Shouldn't we speak those words for which we are the most logical member to the group to speak? Shouldn't we think before we talk, not after, when we may discover too late that somebody has been deprived of a needed experience.

Let's remember that while children need to learn to listen to each other and to adults, we too, need to learn to listen. We need to learn to listen more to what children have to say.

#### *And Children Listen!*

Despite the trend away from the old-fashioned recitation period toward group

discussion, too many lessons are taught in the manner of an "Information, Please" program. In *dynamics of learning*<sup>2</sup> the author calls it "verbal ping pong." Many teachers ask questions that require one word or one idea answers. Answers most acceptable are often those parroted from the book.

Rarely are the questions the type that set people thinking. Seldom do they encourage students to organize information from experiences, from interviews, and from reading. Do your questions help students formulate hypotheses, test them, draw conclusions, and summarize significant findings? Do the "why", "how", and "in what way" questions outnumber the "when" and "where" questions? Questions that ask how and why help people to see relationships, combine ideas, and arrive at new concepts. Questions should be designed to open new fields of thought to students, to set them off in individual and group thinking far beyond the original question and the need for another one. Questions should be the sparks that start the motor running, not the fuel that keeps it going.

Although a group discussion needs a leader, when a teacher feels that she must comment after every remark made by a child, the discussion may become stilted and artificial. Trite remarks by the teacher may add nothing to the discussion and may actually do harm in shutting off some student's comment. Children should be learning to take turns, but their ideas, suggestions, and questions should be flowing freely in a life-like situation. They, not the

<sup>2</sup>Cantor, Nathaniel. *Dynamics of Learning*. Buffalo, New York, Foster and Stewart Publishing Corporation, 1946.

teacher, should be developing a feeling of responsibility for carrying forward the problem to its ultimate conclusion. When denied the opportunity of assuming this responsibility, initiative and spontaneity may become atrophied.

While many classrooms in use today make group discussion difficult, it is not impossible with careful pupil-teacher planning to set the stage for experiences in large and small groups.

#### *Why Listen?*

Although to whom we listen is of great importance, to what we listen is no less important. We speak when there is someone to listen to us. We listen when we want to hear what a speaker is saying. A real purpose for listening is the best insurance that the cycle of communication will be completed.

What are legitimate reasons for asking boys and girls to listen. Why does anybody listen? We may listen because we want the information we can get through listening. We may need to know specific directions and descriptions. Some esthetic experiences can best be enjoyed through hearing them. Sometimes we need to evaluate what a speaker is saying and sometimes we need to evaluate his way of saying it. If we are to be able to defend our points of view we must hear what is said by those opposing them. At times we feel a responsibility for helping to reach conclusions. Active listening and a felt need complement each other in the same way that passive listening and inattention go hand in hand.

Undoubtedly in a schoolroom there will be times when a listening activity can serve no real purpose for certain individ-

uals, when to insist on their listening may foster poor listening habits. Unless the student feels an intrinsic interest in, and a need for hearing what is being said or read, he may escape into daydreams. He will listen to his fellows or the teacher when a personal need is being satisfied or he feels a responsibility for the welfare of the group. Boys and girls quickly develop a "we" feeling in a classroom in which each individual's needs are the concern of all. Group loyalty and concern make it possible to vary activities in the best interests of each student.

The following questions may serve as guide posts for planning listening activities.

Which of the students need to hear what will be said?

Who in the group most needs the experience of saying it?

Is the purpose for listening clear to the prospective listeners?

What particular listening skills are necessary in this type of listening?

What outcomes can be expected from this activity?

What is the teacher's function in this learning situation?

If we think through these six points, we will see that often with the help of the pupils we will need to plan other learning experiences for those not in need of this verbal and auditory practice.

#### *And Environment Helps*

But planning to meet individual needs and establishing a purpose for listening are not enough. Boys and girls, sitting row upon row, facing the back of somebody's



head, are scarcely in a position to listen to each other. Listening should be a face to face experience, for facial expression as well as what is said helps us to communicate with each other. Rigid row upon row seating is less detrimental to good listening when the speaking or reading is the responsibility of one child, than in a discussion situation, in which children are expected to participate spontaneously.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to have movable furniture can easily make the adjustments for small or large groups sitting in a circle, a "u" formation or a hollow square. Seats can quickly be shifted to accommodate the size of the group or the nature of the activity.

But what about those of us who have no choice other than to try to fit our activities into a classroom of screwed-down seats. It is not easy, but there are things we can do. We can, for instance, sit in a double row around the edges of the room with those in the front sitting on the tops of the desks and facing back. We can have small groups sitting on the desk tops in the corners or on the floor. We can use the halls and the cloakrooms. We can use our ingenuity and imagination in finding places for group meetings.

We may be able to do little about acoustics and furniture, but we can always keep asking and planning—yes, even praying for rooms in which we can more easily do the things we will do anyway. We can make the best of what we have, but we don't have to like it, and we don't need to be so discouraged by things as they are that we settle comfortably into the ruts which may become the graves of our dreams.

### *Experiences That Help*

What activities promote good listening habits? Pupils and teachers planning activities together are practicing speaking and listening. We need smaller doses of lectures and long reports and much more group discussion. Several small committees experimenting, investigating, and doing research will provide many more persons active participation. Creative experiences in painting, music, dramatics, and writing can provide topics for conversation. We can give the students more appreciational experiences in fine and graphic arts, great music and literature. And we can help them explore individual and group interests. Listening can be an important factor in all these experiences. Overemphasis on any one may ruin its effectiveness. Life makes many demands upon us for many types of listening skills. Has our school listening diet been too restricted?

### *How Do We Know It Works?*

How can we evaluate anything so intangible as the listening process and the results? How can we measure how well our teaching of listening is doing what we hope it will do for the boys and girls? Surely no paper and pencil test of what is heard and what is retained will tell us what we want to know. In evaluating this program we must consider the child's total behavior pattern. Our way of solving our personal and social problems is somewhat dependent upon skill in the use of language.

What children have heard and what they have discussed should be apparent in the way they act, the things they say, and the way they feel. Their attitudes can be the keys that open the doors for us to a

better understanding of their behavior. To whom, and to what they listen we hope will affect their attitudes to some degree.

While learning to listen well cannot alone bring about the changes we hope to see, broader and richer learning experiences may. An enriched curriculum may increase interest in and curiosity about our democratic heritage, cultural background, science, current events, social problems, government, and the social process.

### *Thinking and Acting*

Perhaps we *have* claimed too much for this activity we have called listening. Perhaps we *have* created an erroneous impression. We have never meant to say that we think critical intelligent listening is the cure for all the ills of a sick world. All thinking people know that individuals learn through doing, seeing, feeling and listening. To claim that we learn by only one of these facets would be sheer stupidity. Emphasis on one to the neglect of any other one would be folly. If we are seeking to help people to better self integration we will not be able to keep these experiences in separate compartments.

With the thought in mind that listen-

ing is only one way through which learning takes place, let us refer to the questions at the beginning of this article. We have tried to say that as teachers we should listen more, think more about who should be the speaker and who the listener, and carefully study the worth of those things to which we have children listen. We have said that children should know how to listen, why they listen, and to whom they should listen. We have suggested that we examine our classroom practices and plan to use those that most effectively establish good listening habits. And last we have said that the best evaluation of our educational program is in the changing behavior we are able to observe. We will never be able to evaluate a listening program in isolation, but only as a part of a larger whole. We believe that learning to listen intelligently is the area in language education that has been most neglected. We believe that our listening education quotient is below par. We believe that we can improve the quality of our teaching by giving careful consideration to the fourth aspect of language. And we believe as teachers become sensitive to this need for giving "Listening" a square deal we will see changes in our educational products.

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## CREATIVE WRITING IN A FIRST GRADE

(Continued from Page 249)

my children would not be good enough to bother with, but *they are*. They are, because of what went into their making and because of what results to the child from their making—an increased awareness of

the world about him, a delight in having been able to make a recognized contribution to his peer group, and, most important, a new reliance upon his own intelligence and judgment.

# What Children Know About Fairy Tales

MILDRED D. BABCOCK<sup>1</sup>

Our college story-telling class had real fun this fall when they conducted a survey on fairy-tales throughout the demonstration school. The class first compiled a list of what all members thought were the most popular of fairy-tales. Each volunteered to work with an assigned grade level. First they talked with the class informally, hoping to ease them into a fairy-tale mood: following this they invited the students to help them prepare their assignment for the story-telling class. This brought the older groups into a spirit of cooperation where at first there had been a feeling of aloofness.

The one best known, generally, out of a total of four hundred and eighty one (481) children present was *The Three Bears*, all but twelve (12) in the entire school knew that delightful tale. *Little Red Riding Hood* followed with everyone but nineteen (19) in the school knowing it. Only twenty-three (23) failed to recognize *The Three Little Pigs*. Listing the others in order of familiarity they are: *Cinderella*, *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *The Gingerbread Man*, *Puss In Boots*, *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Hen*, *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *Rumplestiltskin*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, *The Pied Piper*, *The Lad Who Went to the North Wind*, *Chicken Little*, *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, *The Bremertown Musicians*, *Snow White and Rose Red*, *Thumbelina*,

*The Brave Little Tailor*, *Leak In the Dyke*, *The Twelve Brothers*, *Why the Sea Is Salty*, *Dick Whittington's Cat*, and *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*.

Not one child in the kindergarten knew *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *Why the Sea Is Salty*, *Leak In the Dyke*, *Dick Whittington's Cat*, *The Brave Little Tailor* or *The Twelve Brothers*. There did not seem to be one story that all in the class knew, this is not surprising as five year olds usually prefer experience stories.

In the first grade all children knew *The Three Little Pigs*, *Cinderella*, *The Little Red Hen*, *Chicken Little*, *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*, *The Gingerbread Man*, *The Fisherman and His Wife*, *The Three Bears*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss In Boots*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Jack and the Bean Stalk*, *Rumplestiltskin*, and *The Pied Piper*. The young man who was assigned to work in the first grade came back to class a little disturbed, he doubted if they knew as many stories as they said they did, he thought they were just being agreeable. We thought it possible for them to have known so many as six year olds in most schools have heard a goodly collection of tales, as a rule it is the most acceptable channel of learning on the preschool level. One other reason why the classes in the demonstration school seem to be well stocked in stories might be due to the fact that our story-telling classes are in and out

<sup>1</sup>Head of Kindergarten-primary education, College of Education, University of Akron.

of the rooms throughout the school year telling stories to gain experience and observe reactions. When this same young man was telling a story one day a little fellow who always became lost in every story and was forever interrupting with why, what for, how did they kill the dragon, what is a scale etc. looked up at him when he had finished a story and said in a very calm, deliberate tone, "How did you know all that?"

In the second grades there was not a story that every child knew, neither was there one that no one recognized. All third graders recognized four of the fairy-tales: The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Jack and the Bean Stalk yet the only story that not one single child knew was The Leak In the Dyke. In the fourth grade there was no one story that all acknowledged knowing, neither was there a story that was not recognized by some member of the two classes. On the fifth grade level the same held true while in the sixth grade not one story could be recalled by the entire class and the one tale that no one knew was The Tongue-Cut Sparrow. In the seventh grade there were eighteen (18) stories claimed yet not a single child could identify The Brave Little Tailor. In the eighth grade there was not one single fairy-tale that every student could recall neither was there one but what some-one in the group recognized. These figures represent the total for the two kindergarten groups, two six year old groups, two seven year old groups and two eight year old groups. There were two fourth grades but all groups above the fourth were in one class.

This survey was taken during the sec-

ond month of the fall term. Perhaps there might have been better recall had the survey been made near the end of the spring term for children then would have been hearing stories throughout the school months.

After the story-telling class had completed their questionnaires with their assigned age groups, they asked for a show of hands on quotations that they recognized from some of these same fairy-tales. They did not tabulate these results but were able to arouse a great deal of enthusiasm. Many who failed to recognize stories by title knew rather quickly the story when a quotation was given. In the two five year old groups our story-teller did not recognize any outstanding differences in literary background. Every hand went up when she started; "Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in." as well as when she started; "When the clock struck twelve the princes disappeared." The other quotation that everyone recognized was. "Somebody has been eating my porridge."

In the second grades there was only one quotation that no one could figure out, —— "For you shall be Lord Mayor of London." In the fourth grade the quotations that everyone seemed to recall at once were; "Oh, Grandmother I weep because I cannot go to the ball." and "Mirror, mirror on the wall, Who is fairest of us all."

In the fifth grade the story-teller used very simple quotations that were quickly recognized. She would get only a few words spoken when all the hands shot up as a signal of recognition. In the seventh grade the students were confused with the



quotation, "Fe, Fi, Fo, Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman." They were not sure whether it came from "Jack and the Bean Stalk" or "Jack the Giant Killer." They also mistook, "Do not talk so loud, you will wake her and she might escape us yet for she is as little as a thistle-down." They thought it belonged to the story of Tom Thumb instead of to Thumbelina. In the eighth grade only fifteen knew Snow White and Rose Red by title but the majority of the class recognized the story from the phrase, "Stop, stop, don't cut my beard."

The demonstration school is one of the regular public schools drawing its students from the neighborhood, close to the main center of town; it is not a hand-picked group and they pay no tuition. We were also interested in the preschool background of these children; in the kindergarten groups not one child had ever been to Nursery school. In the first grade forty-two (42) out of seventy-five (75) had attended kindergarten and two had been in nursery school. In the second grade sixty

(60) out of sixty-eight (68) had had kindergarten experience and only two had attended nursery school. In the third grade thirty-seven (37) out of sixty-five (65) had been to kindergarten and three had been in nursery school. In the fourth grade fifteen out of sixty had attended kindergarten, only two had had nursery school experience. In the fifth grade eighteen (18) students out of thirty-two (32) had kindergarten background; three had attended nursery school. On the sixth grade level only two had ever attended kindergarten and not one had ever been to nursery school. In the seventh grade four had been to kindergarten, none to nursery school while in eighth grade seven had had kindergarten experience and two nursery school experience. We always thought that those children with preschool experience had a richer background in children's literature, this survey seems to imply the same.

The class concluded after this survey that children today still love and are enthusiastic about the old fairy-tales.

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## Siren Song For Dictatorship

WALTER V. KAULFERS<sup>1</sup>

*If you glue your eyes to the practical stuff  
And hold them down there long enough  
In time you'll be too blind to see  
That all your gods are really ME.*

<sup>1</sup>Professor of education, the University of Illinois.

# Children's Books About Africa

VIOLA K. FITCH<sup>1</sup>

What is Africa to me:  
Copper sun or scarlet sea,  
Jungle star or jungle track,  
Strong bronzed men, or regal black  
Women from whose loins I sprang  
When the birds of Eden sang?<sup>2</sup>

## *The Continent*

Not much more than seventy years ago Africa was an unexplored land. Today the map of it is a patch-work of different colors indicating the powers which control the various countries. Great Britain rules an area approximately forty times that of the British Isles. France has colonies twenty times the size of its home country. Belgium rules regions eighty times the size of Belgium. Only the following are independent: Egypt, Union of South Africa, Liberia and Ethiopia.

The area of Africa is 11,710,424 square miles, and the population is estimated as 157,330,000. This means that Africa is, for the most part, a very thinly populated continent.

It is also a continent of great contrasts. There are jungles, deserts, and grasslands extending for miles. There are high moun-

tains and some of the world's greatest rivers. There are thatched huts and modern homes. There are the tallest and the shortest of men—the Watussi who grow to a height of eight feet, even though their women are of normal height, and the Pygmies who are scarcely four feet high. There are several hundred languages spoken and though it is difficult to give any true classifications because of the great intermingling of the people over the centuries, the total of distinguishable tribes and peoples, including the European, runs well over seventy.

All of these groups have their own histories, cultures, and religions. Many of these are still distinct and intact. On the other hand, some of the natives have become Christians even while retaining many of their own religious beliefs, and there are, also, a goodly number of Mohammedans.

The unusually regular coastline has made the development of seaports very difficult. This has been one of the reasons given for Africa's slow exploration and development. Another reason has been the vastness of the great Sahara desert; invaders and explorers from the north seldom succeeded in crossing it. But the black period of slavery was the real beginning of the white man's contact with the continent. Thereafter followed the mad scramble for power by the European nations. And today, the greatest number of the native people are controlled by outside powers.

<sup>1</sup>Children's Librarian, State Teachers College, Saint Cloud, Minnesota; formerly, Supervisor of work with Children, Wayne County, Library, Detroit. This is the fifth in a series of articles on Children's Books on Foreign Countries, under the general editorship of Helen R. Sattley.

<sup>2</sup>From "Heritage," by Countee Cullen. In *On These I Stand*, Countee Cullen. Harper, 1927. Printed by permission of Harper & Brothers.

The conditions of the natives vary considerably with the philosophy of the ruling government. To greatly oversimplify what has happened, it may be said that the land has been taken from the Africans, and rules imposed without very much regard for the people involved.

The economic possibilities of the country have scarcely been developed, even though one-half of the world's gold supply and nine-tenths of the diamonds come from here. In whatever ventures have been under-taken, the Africans, themselves, have seldom benefited. It is quite evident that the next few years will see great changes taking place. Water power development, agricultural advancement and the shifting status of the native peoples to the foreign powers in control are but a few of the great geographic, economic, political, sociological and psychological influences and situations which combine to make the picture of Africa one of the most complex in the complex world of today and tomorrow.

In a few hundred words there is no possibility of even introducing a subject so great as the continent of Africa. We can only hope that some point may arouse the curiosity of the reader to discover more for himself. For this reason, the following adult bibliography is included. It is of value for informational and reference purposes. It has been prepared under the guidance of the specialists of the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public Library and has been of great help to this writer in her further study of children's books on Africa.

There is so much to know and understand about this land which at one point,

Dakar, is only 1,620 miles from South America. A close neighbor these days!

### *Adult Bibliography*

(This area of Egypt is not considered in this paper since the children's books for both ancient and modern Egypt were felt to be significant enough to warrant individual attention in a separate study.)

Buell, Raymond. *The Native Problem in Africa*. Macmillan, 1928. 2v. o. p.

Author spent fifteen months in Africa gathering information for this thorough publication sponsored by the "Bureau of International Research." Discusses the problems of government, labor, and education, giving texts of significant documents and state papers. Maps, statistical tables, bibliographies and index. Lay-out in geographical sections makes it excellent to use for verification of information used in juvenile books.

Delafosse, Maurice. *The Negroes of Africa: History and Culture*. Translated from the French by F. Fligelman. Associated publishers, 1931. o. p.

A translation of two books originally published in 1921 and 1925. The author, when he died in 1926, was considered the scholar best acquainted with the peoples and languages of West Africa where he had spent seventeen years. Books originally written for the French and emphasis is placed on the French colonies, but the rest of Africa is given consideration.

Hambly, Wilfred. *Source Book For African Anthropology*. Field Museum, 1937. o. p. 2 pts.

Source material which covers such fields as language, literature, social conflict, basic elements, European period, economic life, psychology, hunting cultures and religion. The author was curator of African ethnology at the Field Museum. Publication is not attractive but is stimulating reading.

Maisel, Albert. *Africa: Facts and Forecasts*. Duell, 1943.

Book is divided into sections: Africa and the War, Africa and the Atlantic Charter, and Africa and Its People. In the last section the author has condensed much of the information available elsewhere. Emphasis is more on government and political problems than on culture. Good information about health facilities and education. Bibliography but no index.

Ojike, Mbonu. *My Africa*. John Day, 1946. o. p.

Mr. Ojike is a native of Nigeria. Book is divided as follows: Personal Story, Life in Africa, and Practicing Brotherhood. Appendix includes an annotated book list, an African who's who, and important dates in African history. Index. Some parts are the personal reactions of the author based upon experience as well as academic knowledge, and is therefore valuable since many different points of view should be considered.

### *Children's Books on Africa*

The children's books on Africa, taken as a collection, are very inadequate. We do have some very splendid titles, and authors such as Gatti and Stevens and Waldeck have consistently written books recently which add much to our knowledge and understanding. But there are great gaps in both informational and fiction material and what we do have, considering the continent as a whole, gives us but fragmentary pictures.

At one time, the geographical readers, covering a whole continent in one volume, were very much in demand. We still have several of these in many of our library collections and it would seem from this study that most of them could well be discarded. Almanacs, up-to-date encyclopedia and yearbooks would probably give better statistical information for today than these

and what many of them supplied in human relations values would hardly be missed. Social studies, now, so frequently approach the study of peoples from broad subjects such as life on the desert or in the jungle, village life, industry—i.e. the mining of diamonds—and so on, that it would seem advisable for us to encourage the publication of books on these same broad subjects to supplement and enrich the social studies textbooks. We have some fine ones. There is need of more.

The danger arises, however, that Africa will adways be used as an example of desert or jungle life in a study of the world's people and the broader aspects of the development of Africa and the problems of Africa in their world relationships will be entirely lost. For this reason, we need a history of Africa as a whole. Besides, should we not also encourage the publication of books on the various countries in separate volumes or even books on the influence of individual foreign countries upon the continent—if such books could possibly be written in objective manner with their purpose a better understanding for all? These books should be attractive and have good indexes and bibliographies and the information should be written in a manner useful in the modern classroom; in other words, they should be the same attractive and fine children's books such as we already have on several other countries.

There are few well written biographies in the collection, but there are many historic and modern leaders who have contributed to Africa and whose lives would make interesting reading. The information which Paul Du Chaillu has made avail-



able in his writing for young people and adults should make an exciting biography. In this way his experiences might be preserved for children's reading. Mungo Park, Haile Selassie, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Felix Eboué are other suggestions for subjects of biographies.

Considering the small list of folk literature, it is assumed that we have only scratched the surface because Africa is a country of many peoples with separate heritages. The collections which have been published have been unusually good, and future publications have a high standard to meet. Individual tales created as picture books would also be popular. All folklore collections should contain—and often do not—an explanation of the sources, and they should be edited by some one who knows children as well as folklore.

Several books of folklore were not available for examination. Some of the titles not examined, as well as some of the ones listed below, are out of print. This fact is regretted because of all the material about a country the stories of the people seem the worthiest to maintain.

Storybooks are inadequate in almost all areas and for all ages. Fiction titles for older boys are the most numerous. Boys also read the factual books of explorers with the same interest that they read fiction. For this reason the lack of girls' stories is even more glaring. Why not have some stories about school life in Africa? We already have splendid examples of stories which tell the simple everyday happenings of school life in our own country.

Many tribes and people have not been touched upon, and city dwellers have been

almost entirely neglected. The descendents of early Europeans who settled there, those to whom Africa is as much home as the United States is to those of us whose forefathers came from Europe, are scarcely mentioned. There is no reason why books which tell us in story form about these boys and girls should not have backgrounds which are true. There is no need to over-dramatize the plots. We seek to have our children appreciate Africa as she has been, and is, and to tell the tale with truth.

#### HISTORY, DESCRIPTION AND TRAVEL, BIOGRAPHY

##### *Bibliography of Children's Books*

Akeley, Carl, Mary. *Adventures in the African Jungle*. Dodd, 1930. (5-9)\*

Thrilling accounts of adventures with elephants, hippopotamuses and other animals. Carl Akeley, one of the great explorers, was responsible for many of the exhibits now on display in the African Hall, American Museum of Natural History.

Allen, Nellie. *Africa, Australia and the Islands of the Pacific*. Ginn, 1935. (5-7) Not recommended.

Textbook in which national regions and climate are the areas of greatest emphasis. Word "Negro" is not capitalized. Style is dated since it makes use of the method of "taking children on a journey." Same as 1924 edition, except for population statistics in appendix.

Bontemps, Arna. *Story of the Negro*. Knopf, 1948. (6-9)

Only about twenty-five pages deal with Africa, but they are unusually well written and well organized. A brief survey of the Negro before he was brought to America. Perhaps Mr. Bontemps is the person who will add to our meager list of factual books about Africa.

\*Approximate grade levels.

Bradley, Mary. *Alice in Elephantland*. Appleton, 1929. o. p. (5-6) Not recommended.

At nine Alice made her second trip to Africa with her "Mummy," "Daddy," a nurse, and two professors whom she called "Uncle." This is a poor book, not because of its subject matter and possibilities, but because of the author's unskillful writing, and manner of "writing down."

Busoni, Raffaello. *Stanley's Africa*. Viking, 1944. (7-9) Not recommended.

Material is here for a good book. Sources are admirable, sketches are fine, index and notes make it useful, but it lacks readability for young people. Too many historical details handicap young readers. Sometimes author has a peculiar slant in his attitudes. For example, "In the African villages slavery was an institution that wasn't terrible at all." Paragraph further explains slavery in terms of its advantages in an African village. Is not the thought of one man's ownership of another "terrible" within itself?

Carpenter, Frank. *Africa*. American Book, 1933. o. p. (5-8) Not recommended.

Author emphasizes how the different countries of Africa are connected with United States through trade and commerce. He frequently enters the story to give his opinion. Out-of-date.

Du Chaillu, Paul.

*Country of the Dwarfs*. Harper, 1928.

*Country of the Dwarfs*. Harper, 1871.

*Lost in the Jungle*. Harper, 1928.

*My Apingi Kingdom*. Harper, 1928.

*Stories of the Gorilla Country*. Harper, 1928.

*Wild Life Under the Equator*. Harper, 1928.

*World of the Great Forest*. Scribner, 1900. (6-8) Not recommended.

Paul Du Chaillu, one of the first modern explores of Africa, was born in France and later became a United States citizen. His first journey through West Africa was made in 1855. He was the first to study and collect gorillas. His reports in the field of zoology, geography, and

ethnology were received with suspicion, but were later substantiated.

Books listed above were published for his "young friends" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They have remained in many children's book collections, and have been recommended on bibliographies ever since. In 1928, Harper & Brothers re-published their titles.

To discover what changes were made at that time, the 1871 and the 1928 editions of *Country of The Dwarfs* were examined. The later edition has been re-set, illustrations by Mrs. Allena Best substituted for engravings, long chapter headings shortened and portions of the text omitted. Apparently the selections omitted were some in which the author became involved in philosophy and, in one instance, in a discussion of one of his previous books. In spite of these improvements these books are "kind of hard going" as one youth recently reported. Beneath the old-fashioned "writing down" of the author and the many detailed descriptions are facts of historical significance, but they are also probably available in the author's adult books.

Today we have other reports of explorers that are fine. It is, therefore, recommended that these titles should not be purchased for new collections or be recommended in bibliographies.

Eaton, Jeannette. *David Livingstone Foe of Darkness*. Morrow, 1947. (6-9)

This is exemplary biography from its beginning in Scotland where Livingstone was born, to its ending in Africa with the epic march of the natives, bearing Livingstone's body from inland to the coast. Miss Eaton has used only the historical data which is essential for a background for Livingstone's movements. Result is, as one young reader said, "He moves along from adventure to adventure." Set-up of pages is very attractive, and illustrations by Ralph Ray are excellent.

Encyclopedia Britannica Press. *Kana, Prince of Larkest Africa*. Encyclopedia Britannica Press, 1947. (3-5)

The many pictures used to illustrate this simple but very effective text, are from a film made of the Watussi people, a royal tribe of herdsmen. Kana's family is introduced as they are eating, and their home and some customs described. It is planting time and a ceremonial dance is being celebrated. During the celebration Kana's father is called to hunt a leopard. More of this kind of story about foreign countries is needed. There is no effort to make the life of these people exotic. That Kana's father is called to hunt a leopard is probably as much a part of the Watussi's life as is the call to serve as a volunteer fireman in a small community in the U. S.

Gatti, Ellen and Attilio. *Here Is Africa*. Scribner, 1943. (6-9)

A first purchase. Authors have spent a great deal of time in Africa, and base their statements upon first hand information. First chapter is a glance across the whole continent; then follow chapters dealing with some of the separate countries and peoples. Interspersed with information about history, customs, the land and its people are personal observations of the authors. Many splendid photographs, a colorful cover, excellent maps and an index.

Gatti, Attilio. *Kamanda an African Boy*. McBride, 1941. (5-8)

Kamanda, a little boy of the Belgium Congo, went with one of the Gatti expeditions. There were many new marvels for him to see, but the thing which Kamanda wanted most was to become a "chau-ver" and drive one of the big, blue "motorcar-i." The story ends with Kamanda's first important drive. Important because a native boy is treated as an individual.

Gatti, Attilio. *The King of The Gorillas*. Doubleday, 1932. o. p. (6-9)

Contrary to the title, this is not a story entirely devoted to gorillas. One episode is about hunting elephants in the Belgium Congo. In

this chapter, the statement, "Everything that affected the welfare of this enormous dominion was very dear to the heart of this grand ruler (King Leopold II)," might be contested by some critics of Belgium's African policies. In many respects it is a pity that this title is out of print.

Harris, Leila, Kilroy. *It Happened in South Africa*. McKnight, 1936. o. p. (4-6) Not recommended.

Factual information about the early settlement and development of the country told by means of conversations between two children and their mother. Dull and uninteresting.

Waldeck, Theodore. *Treks Across the Veldt*. Viking, 1944. (6-8)

Stories of Mr. Waldeck's expedition into Tanganyika and the Belgium Congo to capture animals. Opening chapter is a lovely description of an African dawn, and the last chapter is a sad farewell to Africa. Other chapters are isolated episodes, telling in a very exciting manner about the capturing of the various specimens. Twelve sepia drawings by Ivan Sanderson.

Waldeck, Theodore. *On Safari*. Viking, 1940. (5-9)

First part tells the amusing story of author's first African expedition. Other chapters deal with tense episodes which happened during later expeditions. Interesting. Valuable.

### Folklore

Best, Allena (Erick Berry). *Black Folk Tales*. Harper, 1928, o. p. (3-5)

Thirteen very short folk tales retold from the Hausa of Northern Nigeria. Often the stories start with the phrase, "This, then, is a tale," which may very well equal the "Once upon a time," used by other storytellers. Many themes are the same as those of the folk tales of other lands. The book is attractive and useful. It is too bad that any well collected folk material should be allowed to go out of print.

Cendrars, Blaise. *Little Black Stories*. Brewer & Warren, 1929. o. p. (4-5)

Eleven folk tales translated from the French by Margery Bianco. Illustrations are from original woodblocks and are exotic and sophisticated, compared with the folk quality of the text. Most of the stories are the "why" variety of animal stories.

Courlander, Harold, and Herzog, George. *The Cow-Tail Switch and Other West African Stories*. Holt, 1947. (5-7)

Seventeen folk tales gathered from different sources which are identified in the notes. Subject matter treats of both animal and man, of their frailties and strengths. Well written material. Format exceptional.

Elliot, Geraldine. *The Long Grass Whispers*. Putnam, 1939. (4-7)

As the African people move about during the day, the long grass whispers many things about their men and animals. But it is taboo to speak concerning them in the daytime; only at night around the fire when the grandmothers tell tales can such things be mentioned. Fifteen such animal tales told by an old Ngoni man. The pictures are in gray and white and in all instances seek to be humorous. The simple folk quality of some of the other collections is missing.

Graham, Lorenz. *How God Fix Jonah*. Reynal, 1946. o. p. (6-9)

Twenty-one stories with Biblical subject content which are "offered in the idiom of the West African native." Their form and vocabulary are probably the result of the long telling by missionaries, and then in turn the telling by the village storytellers. The result is stories of a poetical quality with background and description African rather than Biblical. Excellent woodcarvings and attractive format.

Kalibala, Ernest, and Davis, Mary Gould. *Wakaima and the Clay Man*. Longmans, 1946. (3-5)

Dr. Kalebala has told thirteen animal folk tales which he learned between the ages of five and twelve from his mother and grandmother

in Burgunda. Miss Davis has edited them and the result is perfect storytelling material. Black and white drawings and general format make a book of considerable reading appeal. There is a similarity between these tales and some of the "Uncle Remus" stories.

Lobagola. *The Folk Tales of a Savage*. Knopf, 1930. o. p. (4-6)

Author tells twenty-two folk tales of West Africa as he remembers their being told to him by his mother. They are woven together by the old village storyteller. Most of the stories deal with the cleverness, stupidity or craftiness of animals in dealing with one another, but there are several which tell of witchery. Excellent storytelling material.

Marais, Josef. *Koos, the Hottentot*, Knopf, 1945. (4-7)

The little old shepherd, Koos, lived on a farm in South Africa. He was the storyteller. Any event might remind him of a tale which usually dealt with a phenomenon of nature or the doings of some animal. An excellent collection of stories. Includes some folk music.

Price, Pattie. *Bantu Tales*. Dutton, 1938. (4-5)

Eight stories supposedly narrated by an old Zulu. Text set in short lines imitating poetic form. Rhythmic language. Very attractive pictures.

Rickert, Edith. *The Bojabi Tree*. Doubleday, 1923. (2-4)

In the land of "All-the-Beasts" there was a Great Hunger, even though the animals were near a tree of fruit. No one knew whether or not the fruit was good to eat. Several animals were sent to King Leo with samples to ask whether or not it was edible, and what its name was. Adapted from an African folk tale.

Woodson, Carter. *African Myths*. Associated publishers, 1928. (3-4)

Thirty-nine tales from various sources. Very simply told. Unattractive format but material is useful.



*Fiction*

Best, Allena. *Girls in Africa*. Macmillan, 1928. (5-6)

Mrs. Best has used personal experience and observation to tell these six stories, five of which are about native girls. Native words are frequently used followed directly by the English meaning. Useful.

Best, Allena. *Penny-Whistle*. Macmillan, 1941. o. p. (1-3)

A little boy received the gift of a whistle on which he could play one note. Because everyone was bored listening to it, the little fellow went into the jungle and learned new notes from the jungle dwellers. Amusing and fun to tell.

Best, Allena. *Mom Du Jos*. Doubleday, 1931. o. p. (3-5) Not recommended.

Mon du Jos was a doll remade by the "Lady in the White Sun Helmet" from a little Negro doll of New Orleans into a perfectly dressed doll of Hausaland.

A "cute" and condescending manner about this story. Author speaks of a "ducky little red fez;" "stabbed the very sawdust core of his vanity;" and "Zaki (a lion) and the missus told the kittens to be good children."

Best, Herbert. *Flag of the Desert*. Viking, 1926. o. p. (6-8) Not recommended.

Two sons of British government officials in West Africa are instrumental in capturing an individual plotting a holy war among the natives. There are bits of native customs described, and the relationship of British government officials to the natives is explained, but the story is dull and confusing.

Best, Herbert. *Garram the Chief*. Doubleday, 1932. o. p. (6-8) Not recommended.

Continuation of *Garram the Hunter*. Garram's father died, but Garram would not become Chief. Instead he, with several followers, left the Hillmen, and after years of struggling, fighting and surrounding himself with many new followers, he established the new kingdom

of Yarr. Confusing story with raids, battles, a labyrinth, capturing of a slave convoy and a lonely vigil on a mountain peak.

Best, Herbert. *Garram the Hunter*. Doubleday, 1932. (6-8)

Because of unrest within his father's tribe, Garram was advised to leave until his help was needed. So for the first time a Hillman spent some time in the Mohammed city of the Fulani of the West. Story moves along well, gives a feeling of expanse when the scenes are in the open country, and creates a believable picture of life in a Mohammedan city. Is enjoyed by boys.

Best, Herbert. *Son of the Whiteman*. Doubleday, 1931. o. p. (6-8) Not recommended.

Jerry's father was a white government official. Jerry liked Africa and was not anticipating the imminent journey home to complete his education. But because of his knowledge of the natives, he was rewarded, and could plan his education as he wished. Often Jerry's methods of obtaining information about the natives seem unethical because he takes advantage of native superstition to make himself "big" in their eyes. Once he deliberately caused the sacred crocodile, supposed to contain the souls of the dead and living Zantas, to appear ill. This caused the natives great concern, but Jerry was at hand to save the crocodile and thereby the souls of the Zantas. This is the kind of theme we do not want to perpetuate.

D'Aulaire, Ingri, and D'Aulaire, Edgar. *The Magic Rug*. Doubleday, 1931. o. p. (3-4) Not recommended.

An imaginative picture book about an oriental rug which flew John to a city in Africa where he met a little Bedouin girl who went with him for the rest of his adventure. Plot and vocabulary are for older children than the picture book format.

Davis, Robert. *Pepperfoot of Thursday Market*. Holiday House, 1941. (5-7)

Because Driss, a Berber boy of North Africa, had saved the life of Pepperfoot, an Egyptian donkey, he was the boy's property and became a valuable member of the community.

Story successfully weaves adventure together with unusual customs into a tale which is wholly readable and for the most part credible. The strength, pride and dependence on tradition of the Berber people are exemplified through the actions of Driss. Most attractive format.

Enright, Elizabeth. *Kintu, a Congo Adventure*.

Farrar, 1935. o. p. (3-4)

The little boy, Kintu, was afraid of the jungle and since he knew that he had to overcome his fear, he went to the witch doctor for advice. As a result Kintu made an adventurous trip into the jungle alone. In the end the jungle no longer chants, "Afraid, afraid." Excellent material for an age for which we have little. Author's beautiful illustrations contribute to the delight of this small book.

Gatti, Attilio. *Adventure in Black and White*.

Scribner, 1943. (5-8)

The black of this story is Loko Moto, a native boy, and the white, Bob, a son of an American airport manager in Stanleyville. The first time that Bob went with his father for a weekend to hunt in the jungle, he wandered away from his party and was captured by the dwarfs. Loko Moto plays a great part in his rescue. This is adventure at its highest pitch, with unusual setting, mysterious people and breath-taking episodes.

Graham, Lorentz. *Tales of Momolu*. Reynal, 1946. (4-5)

Momolu had been told that when the rainy seasons came he would be eleven years old—almost a man. So, during his eleventh year he learned to do many new things. There is a nice family feeling in these stories, and such customs as why the African women plant the seeds, are simply explained.

Hoffman, Eleanor. *The Lion of Barbary*. Holiday, 1946. (5-7)

A teen age Puritan lad went from England to Africa to rescue his neighbor, an attractive young girl, who had been captured by pirates. Because of good luck in meeting the right people, an ability to imitate and to learn languages, his trip was successful. The customs and background ring more true than the adventure itself. Attractive format.

Hoffman, Eleanor. *Mischief in Fez*. Holiday, 1943. (4-6)

Fascinating tale of the mischievous djinns in the household of a judge in Fez. Events began to happen when he brought his second wife home. Many troubles were to come to his young son before the mystery was finally unravelled. Good combination of realism and fantasy and a beautiful looking book with illustrations by Frite Lichenberg.

Hoppe, Charles. *Sons of the African Veld*. McBride, 1947. (6-8) Not recommended.

A South African police asked the son of a trader and his two Zulu friends to undertake a mission which involved three unsavory characters. Plot is over-dramatic and there are several objectionable features. In speaking of the English government the author calls it "fatherly" in the same respect as the U. S. government is "fatherly" in dealing with the Indians. Japanese and Nazis are spoken of as "low legged Japs" and "krauts." Represents the poorest kind of adventure story.

Joseph, Alfred. *Sondo, a Liberian Boy*. Whitman, 1936. o. p. (3-4) Not recommended.

A realistic story of Sondo, who on his way home from the rice field, found a baby baboon which he wanted to keep for a pet. A slight story, and not essential.

Kissin, Rita. *Raffy and the Honkebeest*. Messner, 1940. (1-3)

An imaginative picture book of the veldt in which a baby giraffe races with a high-powered automobile, the Honkebeest. Many il-

illustrations in double-page spread give good pictures of the country. Good fun to read aloud. Lide, Alice, and Johansen, Margaret. *Mystery of the Mahleb*. Longmans, 1942. o. p. (6-8) Not recommended.

An involved story of thirteenth century Ethiopia. Physical make-up is that which appeals to younger readers than the plot. Not a wholly successful book.

Martin, Dahrís. *Adventure in Tunisia*. Messner, 1946. (5-7)

Albe was an Arabian boy who should have learned a trade. But he could not, and not because he lacked ability! No, it was because he had a djinn in his brain. He loved to paint! This is the tale of how his painting eventually became acceptable. Family relationships and celebrations are a real part of the story. A more enticing title might make the book more appealing.

Martin, Dahrís. *Awisha's Carpet*. Doubleday, 1930. o. p. (4-5)

Awisha had looked forward to the day when she would be allowed to start weaving her first carpet. It eventually came, the carpet was finished and sold, and then it was that Awisha was considered no longer a child but a maiden who must be veiled. Excellent incidents apart from the story of the carpet. Popular in spite of the unattractive drawings.

Stevens, Alden. *Lion Boy*. Lippincott, 1938. (6-8)

A combination of the every day and the thrilling in the life of Simba, Lion Boy, of the tribe Wanyamlima of Tanganyika, East Africa. One of the most thrilling episodes tells how Simba saved the life of a white boy by risking his own. Simba is not always a good boy, but he is always a real boy. An excellent example of a story which gives background, is exciting, and very real.

Stevens, Alden, and Kendall, Patricia. *Mark of the Leopard*. Lippincott, 1947. (6-8)

Simba, the hero of *Lion Boy*, has not yet be-

come a warrior. For a long time he has wanted to escort Kiheti, an aged warrior from another village, back to his people. In 1939 Simba is allowed this privilege. The plot is highly improbable, but the story has excellent background, giving many of the native customs. There are episodes which distinguish the attitudes of the Hindu traders, the German agents and the British government men toward the Africans, and, in turn, the African's attitudes toward them.

Singer, Caroline, and Baldrige, Cyrus LeRoy. *Boomba Lives in Africa*. Holiday House, 1935. (4-6)

Boomba, boy of West Africa, took his father's gun without permission, and killed the leopard which had killed the chief's goat. The authors state that they have not used the correct name for Boomba's people lest they "be suspected of posing as anthropologists." It is difficult to understand this reasoning. In order to make the people of the world the authors have interrupted their story to point out similarities. A good feeling prompts this method, but it retards the progress of a fiction story. A story which should have been better.

Stinetorf, Louise. *Children of North Africa*. Lippincott, 1943. (4-6)

Twelve stories which concern children of Egypt, Anglo Egyptian Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Liberia and French West Africa. No effort has been made to dramatize the plots, and yet each is a fairly exciting story. Settings are modern, but in some instances, interesting historical data has been used on which to develop the plots. The author knows Africa as a traveler and resident.

Stinetorf, Louise. *Children of South Africa*. Lippincott, 1945. (4-6)

These twelve stories are sufficiently realistic to make their happenings easily imagined. Author's attitude toward the people is stated in the introduction where she says that the people

may look different from us "on the outside," but are much like us "on the inside." In subtle manner some of the problems of modern Africa are expressed. This writer's stories are important for today.

Waldeck, Theodore. *Jamba the Elephant*. Viking, 1942. (5-8)

Jamba, a young elephant, was captured in an elephant drive. Because he was difficult to train the most experienced mahout was assigned the job, but even he failed. The young son of the greatest Bantu mahout eventually trained Jambu. A tersely written tale which has moments of breathless excitement. Interesting bits of information concerning life in the Belgium Congo.

Waldeck, Theodore. *Lions on the Hunt*. Viking, 1942. (5-8)

Sur Dah, even as a very young lion, showed bravery and intelligence. Eventually he fought the long-time leader and became King of the Lions. A fast moving tale of the veldt, attractively published with pictures by Kurt Wiese. Williamson, Thames. *Talking Drums*. Doubleday, 1936. (6-8) Not recommended.

Talking drums brought disturbing messages to the Ashanti workmen who were building a

railroad in West Africa. Phillip, son of the engineer, uncovered their secret. The Negroes are treated as children without a whit of sense, very little status or human rights. The foreman, for example, says, "We're four white men in darkest Afriky, with two hundred black children a-surroundin' us. Dumb children if I know the word."

Wells, Rhea. *Ali, the Camel*. Doubleday, 1931. o. p. (3-4)

Bali, a Bedouin boy, and Ali, a baby camel, make their first caravan trip to the city. Conventionalized page decorations, highly colored. Popular with many younger readers.

Wilwerding, Walter. *Keema of the Monkey People*. Macmillan, 1936. o. p. (4-6)

A blue monkey of East Africa grows up to become the leader of his troop. Told from the monkey's point of view. Just the kind of incidents young children enjoy.

Wilwerding, Walter. *Punda the Tiger-Horse*. Macmillan, 1937. o. p. (4-6)

Highlights in the life of a zebra in East Africa. Excellent episodes which tell how zebras protect themselves. It is too bad to have this author's attractive books go out of print.

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I believe that the liberally educated person is one who is deeply interested in life and who readability scores as grade levels may enjoys it one way or another, a person who is sympathetic and generous in his attitude to other people, to other cultures, and to other countries than his own, who accepts his world and himself as a growing, changing enterprise in whose advance he has a significant part to

play, who is sensitive to the beautiful and the ugly in actions and objects, who believes in human rights and human freedom, who has a degree of knowledge and knows how to get the knowledge he doesn't have, and has at least a moderate skill in the art of living. It would also help if he were rational.

Harold Taylor

Human Nature and Education



# Validity of Self-Evaluation Charts in Developmental Reading Programs

THORNTON C. BLAYNE\*

The value of pupil participation in evaluation has long been recognized in developmental reading programs for young people who are below grade average in speed of comprehension.<sup>1</sup> This participation has usually taken the form of reading-progress charts or graphs kept by the pupils themselves as a means for recording their growth in terms of the number of words read per minute together with percent of comprehension on informal objective tests.

The illustrations accompanying this article are reproductions of student-made progress charts showing their growth in speed and comprehension over periods varying from six to eight weeks. In this case, the data needed for constructing the graphs were computed by the pupils themselves from number of words read per minute on graded selections chosen by the instructor for testing purposes, and from percent of items answered correctly on tests of comprehension devised and administered by the teacher. Methods of recording the findings on graph paper were taught the pupils as a group in connection with the first reading test, and checked for accuracy from time to time during the evaluation period following each timed reading session.

How valid and reliable are such pupil-made graphs? How safely can they be used in determining the stage at which a student is eligible to take a final standardized

reading examination prior to release from a developmental reading course? What levels of attainment in speed and comprehension should a student attain before he can be considered sufficiently grounded in basic reading skills to maintain his newly acquired proficiency without danger of backsliding a few weeks later?

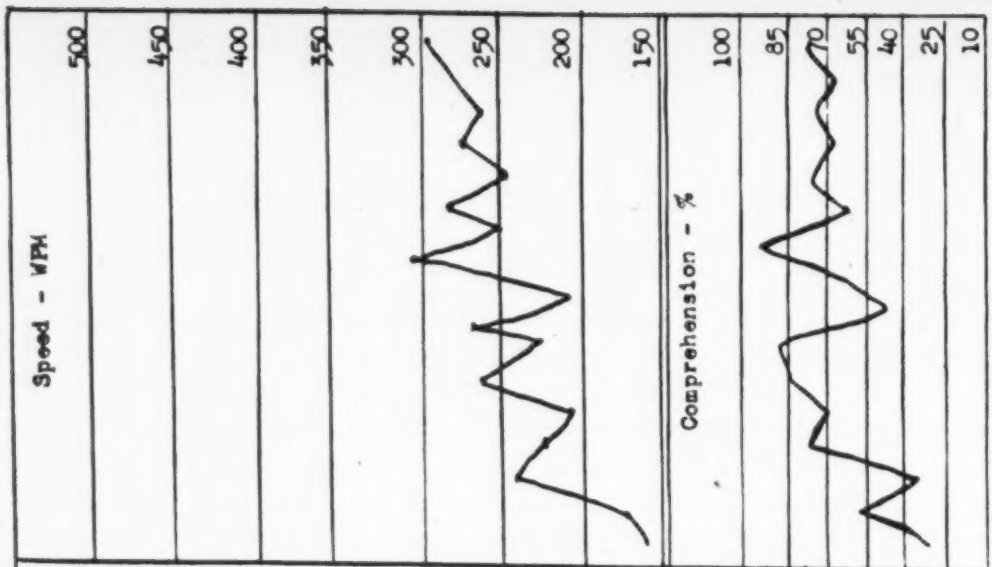
The answers to these questions are based on the records of 45 students in grades nine to eleven of the Menlo School and Junior College during the year 1944-1945. Each student graphed his growth in speed and percent of comprehension as shown by objective class tests given three to four times weekly.<sup>2</sup> Three representative examples of these graphs are provided in the accompanying charts for top-ranking, median-ranking, and low-ranking students

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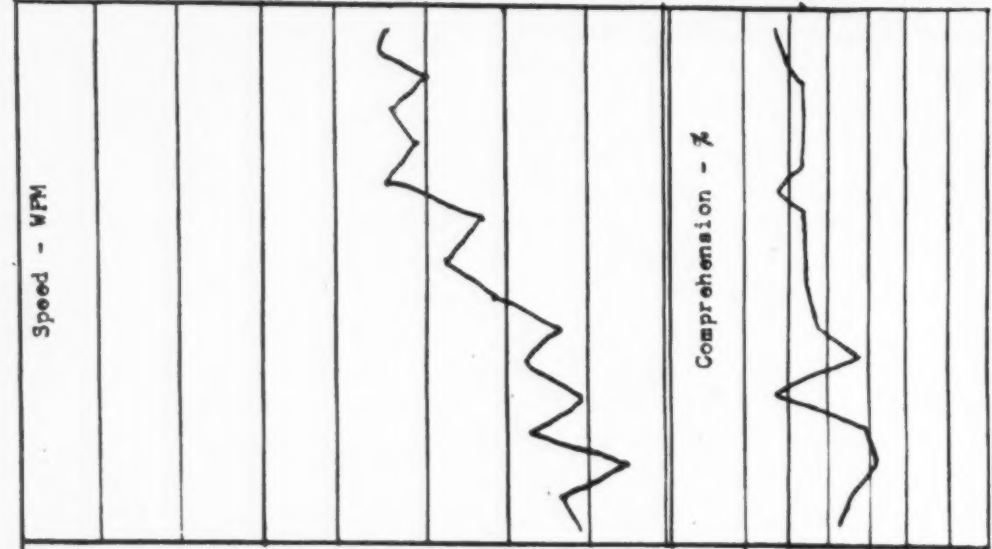
<sup>1</sup>For an effective discussion of this topic in concrete, practical terms, see Walter V. Kaulfers, *Modern Languages for Modern Schools*, McGraw Hill Book Company, New York, Chapter XIII, pp. 406-412.

<sup>2</sup>For a more detailed description of organization and methods, see Thornton C. Blayne, "Reading Center Implements Guidance", *California Journal of Secondary Education*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May, 1945, pp. 288-92. "Telescopic Briefs" in Building Reading Comprehension", *The English Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 3, March, 1945, pp. 154-57. For comparable applications to the teaching of reading in the foreign languages, see "Building Comprehension in Silent Reading", *The Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4, April, 1945, pp. 270-76.

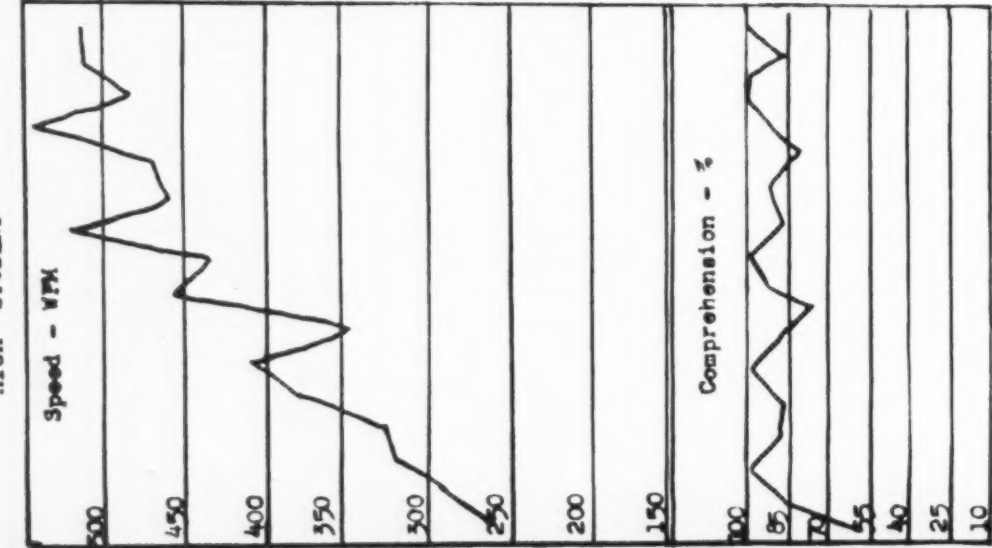
# LOW STUDENT



# MEDIAN STUDENT



# HIGH STUDENT



in the group. The median scores in speed and comprehension shown on the graphs were correlated with corresponding percentile scores on the Traxler reading tests.<sup>3</sup> This comparison yielded a coefficient ( $r$ ) of .58 for comprehension and of .77 for speed.

Since teachers' grades rarely correlate higher with objective tests in the subject-matter fields, the reading-progress charts can be considered somewhat more valid measures of comprehension than the average run of school marks. In the case of speed in reading, the progress charts appear to be considerably superior to teacher judgment as commonly expressed in terms of grades. It would seem justifiable, therefore, to conclude that pupil participation in self-evaluation through the medium of individual progress charts can yield indices of achievement valid enough to justify their use in determining whether a student has improved sufficiently to warrant the time and expense of administering a standardized silent-reading test. The correlations also seem to warrant the conclusion that the graphs themselves can be used independently in judging reading readiness if no standardized test with a reliability greater than .70 to .80 is available for the student's particular grade level. In such cases, however, the graphs must obviously be based upon an adequate sampling of informal progress tests spaced over a period of at least six to eight weeks, for the reliability of all evaluations ultimately depends to a very significant degree upon the number of samples upon which they are based.

<sup>3</sup>*Traxler High School Reading Tests*, by Arthur E. Traxler, Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Illinois.

What speeds of comprehension should students attain on material of average difficulty for their grade before they can be considered adequate readers? To provide a partial answer, Table I presents tentative grade norms interpolated from four professional sources<sup>4</sup> and from the records of successful students enrolled in the Menlo School and Junior College. Only speed is given—comprehension throughout being assumed as 75 percent or higher.

TABLE I  
SPEEDS OF COMPREHENSION FOR  
GRADE-AVERAGE MATERIAL  
GRADES 1-12 AND COLLEGE

Grade	Average Words per Minute
1	55
2	90
3	105
4	160
5	190
6	210
7	240
8	280
9	310
10	340
11	350
12	350 - 400
College	375 - 425

When a retarded student's graph of progress on four or more informal objec-

<sup>4</sup>A. E. Taylor, *Controlled Reading*, University of Chicago Press, 1937, p. 126 and *passim*; Luella Cole, *The Improvement of Reading*, Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., New York, 1938. 338 pages, p. 50; Albert J. Harris, *How to Increase Reading Ability*, Longmans, Green and Co., 1940, 403 pages, p. 24; *The News Letter*, Volume IX, No. 3, December, 1943, Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, p. 4.

(Continued on Page 292)

# Look and Listen

Edited by LILLIAN NOVOTNY<sup>1</sup>

## Radio and Television

The Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the School Broadcast Conference will be held in Chicago at the Sherman Hotel, October 18, 19, and 20, 1949. The hotel has set aside a block of rooms and will accept reservations immediately. Program plans are still tentative, except for the Annual SBC-AER Luncheon. Dr. Benjamin Fine, education editor for the *New York Times*, will be the guest speaker. Dr. Fine's subject is, "The Crisis in American Education." The speaker will be introduced by Dr. Herold C. Hunt, General Superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools. Plans for the rest of the program promise to be equally interesting and meaningful.

School entries for the Annual Utilization of Radio Competition should reach the offices of the School Broadcast Conference, 228 North La Salle Street, Chicago 1, Illinois, on or before June 1, 1949. The entries submitted should include any description or teacher's utilization suggestions concerning the program series or individual broadcast, the teacher's own brief description of the series or individual program, written briefly in double-spaced typing on one side of the paper, a brief paragraph or two concerning the preparation made with the class for listening, and a brief paragraph or two concerning the *use* made of the program by the class. The entry may include samples of student work motivated by the broadcast as well as an evaluation of the program or series.

Stations, both commercial and educational, are also invited to submit transcriptions of their educational and public service programs which are used in school time or are slanted to a

<sup>1</sup>Miss Novotny is principal of the Oriole Park School in Chicago, and a member of the Council's Committee on Radio.

juvenile audience during out-of-school hours. These entries should include a brief paragraph outlining objectives of the series or program, some evidence of acceptability of the program both by intended listeners and by school and civic groups, any pamphlets, handbooks, or other promotional materials which were used in connection with the series, and possibly newspaper clippings, letters, photographs, or other material promoting or showing the use of the program.

Norman Corwin has been commissioned to write a new work for a one-hour broadcast in June 1949 by the CBS Documentary Unit, headed by Werner Michel. This will be Corwin's first undertaking for CBS since 1947.

The Corwin work will dramatize a new phenomenon of the Twentieth Century, the individual who exercises world-embracing citizenship by using his workaday training and talents to improve humanity's material well-being, striving thus to strengthen universal peace.

In announcing the new Documentary Unit Production, Davidson Taylor, CBS Vice President and Director of Public Affairs, noted that it will deal neither with world government nor with people whose primary motivations and spheres of activity are political. It will emphasize, rather, the magnitude and urgency of the international struggle to raise world living and thinking standards.

Corwin has been working on a Broadway play for the past six months. Beginning with "Words without Music" in 1938, he has been associated with the Columbia Broadcasting System in such series and broadcasts as the "Columbia Workshop," "26 by Corwin," "Pursuit of Happiness," "This Is War," "On a Note



of Triumph," "One World Flight," and many others.

The Documentary Unit's first 1949 production was "Mind in the Shadow," a one-hour drama telling the story of the nation's mental health needs. The wide acclaim of critics, public and professional workers in mental health and related fields resulted in a re-broadcast on February 20. The original broadcast was on February 2.

The Columbia Broadcasting System and Station KLZ, the network's Denver affiliate, are the recipients of annual awards made by the National Conference of Christians and Jews for "outstanding contributions during the past year to mutual understanding and respect among people of diverse backgrounds through the powerful medium of radio."

The award to the network was made for three individual broadcasts: "The Dreyfuss Case," a newscast reenactment of the historic French "cause celebre" written by Joseph Liss and presented on CBS' "You Are There"; and for two special documentary dramas, "The Friend and Peter Stuyvesant," and "For This We Live."

The award to Station KLZ was made for its over-all contributions in this area of broadcasting.

On the Chicago television scene, Thursdays from 8:00 to 8:15 p. m., one program is making entertainment capital of anachronisms by lifting characters of fact and fiction from their expected surroundings and placing them in situations which are incongruous with the personality's age and clime. The program is WENR-TV's "Second Guesser." In the past weeks, video audiences have seen the goddess Medusa cavorting with Hercules; Little Eva of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" indulging in twentieth century pranks with Little Lord Fauntleroy; and Romeo in a heated discussion of sleeping potions with that master targetwoman, Annie Oakley.

### Films

The Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 27, New York, distributes a series of films showing good school experiences. It is suggested that these may be used to show teachers and prospective teachers how to guide the growth of boys and girls more effectively. They may also be used to picture vividly for the lay people in the community the work of the schools. They are effectively used as "starters" for discussions about local school problems.

*A Day in the Life of a Five-year Old.* Produced by the Metropolitan School Study Council. Two reels, 16 mm sound. Time, 20 minutes. Price \$75.00. Teacher's Guide provided. This film portrays young children interpreting the world about them in a spacious, well-planned and equipped kindergarten setting. The role of the teacher in guiding these children through a happy, meaningful, and satisfying day is clearly shown.

*Learning through Cooperative Planning.* Produced by the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation. Two reels, 16 mm sound. Time, 20 minutes. Price \$75.00. Teacher's Guide provided.

This is the story of how a resourceful elementary school does more than just talk about cooperation. A project of concern and interest to children and the community is skillfully exploited to provide real experiences in planning cooperatively. The examples of democratic guidance given these boys and girls as they solve their problems is illuminating to all who seek more effective ways of working with children.

*We Plan Together.* Produced by the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation. Two reels, 16 mm. sound. Time, 20 minutes. Price \$75.00. Teacher's Guide provided. This companion film to the above shows an eleventh grade group planning cooperatively for learning in its core class over a period of several months. In addition to picturing a core

program in operation, this presents a way of working that increases zeal and efficiency in individual and group activities.

*The Teacher as Observer and Guide.* Produced by the Metropolitan School Study Council. Two reels, 16 mm sound. Time, 20 minutes. Price \$60.00. Teacher's Guide provided. Shows how the resourceful teacher, as an observer and guide of pupil growth, helps pupils find better ways to solve their problems.

*Education through Art and Home Economics.* Produced by the Metropolitan School Study Council. One reel, 16 mm sound, color. Time, 12 minutes. Price \$90.00. Teacher's Guide provided. A color film showing art and home economics teachers working together to provide rich, skill-producing experiences. Cooperation of parents, teachers, and administrators is demonstrated.

*A Guidance Problem for School and Home.* Two reels, 16 mm sound. Time, 20 minutes. Price \$75.00. Teacher's Guide provided. Vividly demonstrates that an understanding of child behavior by both parents and teachers is essential for helping the child to normal growth. A teacher's approach to individual parent-teacher conferences is portrayed.

Bureau of Publications films may be rented from local rental libraries. If you cannot find a rental source for these titles, they will be happy to refer your requests to an appropriate film library for your convenience.

### Filmstrips

Simmel-Meservey, Inc., 321 So. Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, California, producers of educational films and filmstrips, present an interesting listing of filmstrips on child cooperation and self-discipline.

*Jimmy Didn't Listen,* 26 frames, black and white, illustrates to children the importance of listening to instructions and putting materials away in the proper place when they are through with them. Kindergarten through fifth grade.

*Schoolground Discoverer,* 21 frames, black and white, presents the constant problem of the untidy school ground in an interesting new way—telling the story of the school that was almost buried under paper and trash until an obvious solution was found. Kindergarten through ninth grade.

*Share the Ball,* 32 frames, black and white, presents graphically the reasons for sharing school materials, etc. The story of a group of children—each wanting to play with a ball by himself. They discover that by sharing the ball, they have more fun and more time to play. Kindergarten through third grade.

*Share the Sandpile,* 26 frames, black and white, shows what two little boys can do to play happily together. Kindergarten through third grade.

*The Slide,* 33 frames, black and white, demonstrates how sharing benefits all, and also demonstrates that well-founded reasons exist behind certain safety rules.

*The Field Trip,* 36 frames, color and black and white, outlines steps to be taken in planning a successful field trip. Students obtain a visual idea of important steps in planning the trip, problems they may encounter, etc. Fourth grade through ninth.

*The New Book,* 30 frames, black and white, shows that proper use of a book is important, and that wrong use may result in permanent damage. In first-person style, the book tells about the bad and good things that happen to him in the hands of children. Third through sixth grades.

*What Would You Do?* 26 frames, black and white, shows two children who do things together, but react differently. No attempt is made to show that one child is better or more in the right than the other, but the strip merely points up a situation for discussion.

*Working Together,* 23 frames, black and

white, presents to children the advantages of co-operation. Three children, after discovering that no one of them can do a job alone, at last agree to work together. Kindergarten through sixth grade.

### Recordings

Two of the outstanding "You Are There" broadcasts heard over the Columbia Broadcasting System are to be issued by Columbia Records. They will be issued on one 12-inch Long Playing Microgroove record and in two conventional shellac albums of three 12-inch records each.

The unique records feature on-the-scene newscast enactment of two important historical events, "The Signing of the Magna Charta" and "The Battle of Gettysburg." Top reporters and analysis participate in the records; John Daly, Ken Roberts, Don Hollenbeck, Quincy Howe, Richard C. Hottelet, and Ned Calmer.

In the words of one reviewer, "*You are There* takes history out of musty libraries and makes it as arresting as the headlines you just scanned." The objective of the program is not to re-tell history but to make it live again. On the air almost continually since October, 1947, this program has won numerous awards for its entertaining and educational qualities. Requests from radio listeners, educators, editors, and students all over the United States are largely responsible for Columbia's diskings of the programs.

Lewellen's Productions, 8 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 3, Illinois, has available three program kits on recordings that may be used in the classroom or by service clubs of various types.

*The Atomic Bomb*, starring Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg and Mr. Neil Hamilton, presents an authentic, forceful discussion of the atomic bomb. Starting with a simple explanation of what an atom is, the program develops the science of nuclear energy step by step, up to the

type of bomb dropped on Japan and later in the tests at Bikini. Effective control of the new force to prevent world destruction is also discussed.

*Peacetime Uses of Atomic Energy*, starring Mr. Neil Hamilton and Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, starts with an explanation of the simple uranium pile. The program develops the applications of atomic energy in industry, chemistry, biology, medicine, and everyday life. The use of by-products of the pile—ashes of the atomic furnace—is also discussed.

*Meet Your Mind*, starring Brigadier General William C. Menninger, starts with a discussion of the tricks our minds play on us. The program develops into a broad discussion of mental illness and mental health, with particular emphasis on the mechanisms we frequently use to maintain our own mental health.

The programs are cut on 12-inch, unbreakable vinylite recordings cut at 78 r. p. m. so that they can be played on ordinary electric home phonograph equipment. The "Class-Kit" contains a 20-minute program on records, slide film, six 20-page illustrated brochures, special phonograph needles, publicity material for the school paper, instruction sheets for presentation, student quiz sheets, and a Teachers' Guide, prepared by Dr. Paul A. Witty, Professor of Education and Director, Psycho-Educational Clinic, Northwestern University.

The "Club-Kit" includes the 20-minute program on records, fifty 20-page illustrated brochures for members to follow and keep, needles, publicity material including newspaper stories and mats, instructions for presentation, in addition to closing and opening remarks for the program chairman.

The Bureau of Health Education, American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago 10, Illinois, offers a series of recordings entitled *Health Heroes*, twelve quarter-hour health stories:

- 1) Randy Makes Good (good health habits)
- 2) The Missing Boy Scouts (the common cold)
- 3) Curves and Strike Outs (contagious diseases)
- 4) Valerie Meets Vitamins (food)
- 5) Bob Stays Up (sleep and rest)
- 6) Dirty Face (cleanliness)
- 7) Charles Had No Nickname (outdoor play)
- 8) Saving Jerry's Eyes (eyes and vision)
- 9) Jim's Sharp Ears (good hearing)
- 10) Unhappy Henrietta (mental health)
- 11) Jack Plays Doctor (harmful substances)
- 12) The Boy Next Door (community health)

The twelve programs on six 2-sided records are available for \$25.00 net, shipping charges prepaid, with five sets of scripts for the use of teachers. Additional scripts will be furnished at nominal prices, depending on the quantity ordered; prices will be furnished on request.

In order to use these records, one of two arrangements must be made: a) either the school must have a central record-playing unit, with loud speakers in classrooms, or b) arrangements must be made with a local radio station to broadcast the records at a convenient time, and radio receiving sets provided for classrooms. These records are not made available on loan, because permanent ownership by the school is necessary for effective use. Orders should be accompanied by a remittance or by an official purchase order.

Write to the American Book Company, 88 Lexington Avenue, New York 16, New York, for their circular on Audio Education which lists available Decca records recommended for use in teaching. Recordings are listed for various grade levels: Primary, Grades two to four, Grades two to five, Grades two to six, Grades four to six, Grades four to eight, Grades six to eight, Grades seven to twelve, Primary-Intermediate, Intermediate, Intermediate-Junior

High, Junior-Senior High School, High School, All Grades, For Use with Any Type-writing Class, For All Modern Language Classes, For Advanced Modern Language Classes, and Teaching Music Creatively. A Teaching Guide is included with each recording obtained through the American Book Company. In general, the guides are organized around three major areas: 1. suggestions for using the recording in the curriculum with at least one teaching unit rather fully developed; 2. a reference section of items found in the recording such as sound effects, unusual vocabulary, and suggestions for further activities; 3. reference suggestions of books and other related audio-visual materials.

### *Equipment*

The Three Dimension Company, 4555 W. Addison Street, Chicago 41, Illinois, presents a modern approach to the reading problem in its Reading Rate Controller, a training instrument for use with children and adults, effective for increasing reading rates, improving reading habits, and developing flexibility of reading rates for various purposes.

This machine was developed from an instrument originally designed by Dr. Guy T. Buswell, Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Chicago, and first reported by him in a monograph published in 1939. Based on the pacing principle, the controller is a simple mechanical instrument for establishing the maximum rate at which a person can read the material placed in the instrument and then read other materials on his own at the same rate. It may be used as early as the beginning of grade four. Reading material is readily accessible, inasmuch as most books, magazines and printed materials may be used. The occluding rate may be varied to meet individual differences in rate through a wide range from 50 to 2200 words per minute.

The instrument (Model TDL-1 sells for \$85.00) is aluminum cast construction and is



finished in soft grey baked crackle finish. It is designed for continuous operation, 50-60 cycle AC, and is recommended for years of trouble-free use. A manual of procedure has been prepared by Dr. Helen Robinson, Director, Reading Clinic, University of Chicago. Tables for establishing reading rates, together with a list of books already calibrated, are included.

The Operadio Manufacturing Company, St. Charles, Illinois, has placed on the market the Miessner Phonoscope. Although this instrument was primarily designed for music training, it has been recommended for other uses: foreign language study, folk dancing, dramatic coaching, remedial speech work, testing the learning, and library listening.

The outstanding feature of this equipment is that it enables the student to hear recordings and see explanatory material simultaneously. The phonoscope optical system, carefully built and accurate as a fine watch, indicates to within one second the exact position of any sound on the record. The indicator is magnified and projected on an illuminated scale beside a printed or written "Record Guide" on the reading board. Thus, the material on the "Record Guide" can be directly calibrated with any portion of the record. A unique, electronic tone arm control makes it possible to stop and start the recording accurately and instantly by the mere flip of a switch. This electronic tone arm control, in conjunction with the calibrated scale, enables the operator to locate any specific part of the recording for identification or repetition quickly and precisely.

Miessner "Record Guides" are available to cover a great many recorded musical works. These charts consist of information pertaining to the records. Lead-lines from the scale to the printed material, accurately indicate pertinent facts as to what is taking place, when, where, and how. It is a simple matter to make new record guides.

For classroom or auditorium use, the "Record Guides" or explanatory sheets are available in slide-film form for projection on a screen. For this purpose a high quality projector is furnished with the Phonoscope. Cues for advancing film in synchronization with the recording are clearly indicated on the guide sheets.

Different models are available for the classroom, auditorium, studio, and library.

### General

Write to the National Script Service, Inc., 4864 Woodward Avenue, Detroit 1, Michigan, for the bulletin on their Spring Introductory Offer which includes six script packages, ranging in price from \$1.75 to \$5.00.

The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York, 34 Nassau Street, New York 5, New York, has released the sixth in a monthly series of scripts on public health problems. The series is provided free of charge as an educational public service by the company. The sixth script, entitled "The Eyes Have It," prepared by Gretta Baker, stresses the proper care of the eyes.

The *FREC Service Bulletin*, February, 1949, reviews four publications on radio listening: *Radio Listening* (Revised), by Leslie Spence, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (35c); *The Radio Listener's Bill of Rights*, by Charles A. Siepmann, Anti Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, New York (25c); *Radio Listening in America*, by Paul F. Lazarfeld and Patricia R. Kendall, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, New York (\$2.50); and *Listening*, by Albert N. Williams, University of Denver Press, Denver, Colorado (\$2.75). Also reviewed in this issue is a guide to the production and promotion of local radio programs entitled *Radio and You*, revised by Nancy Faulkner, Association of Junior Leagues of America, Waldorf-Astoria, New York City (40c).

# The Educational Scene

Edited by MARGARET STEWART<sup>1</sup>

The Council's Nominating Committee, elected by ballot without nominations by the Board of Directors, consists this year of Robert C. Pooley, University of Wisconsin, *chairman*; Dora V. Smith, University of Minnesota; Helene W. Hartley, Syracuse University; Porter G. Perrin, University of Washington; and Ruth Mary Weeks, Paseo High School, Kansas City, Missouri. This Nominating Committee presents at this time a slate of nominees for officers of the Council and for Directors-at-Large. Additional nominees may be named by petition of twenty Directors accompanied by written consent of the persons so nominated and delivered to the Secretary-Treasurer, 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago on or before August 15. Election is by the Board of Directors next Thanksgiving. At that time nominations from the floor are permitted.

The Nominating Committee's slate follows:

*For President:* Mark Neville, John Burroughs School, St. Louis, Missouri

*For First Vice-President:* Paul Farmer, Henry W. Grady High School, Atlanta, Georgia

*For Second Vice-President:* Edna Sterling, Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Washington

*For Secretary-Treasurer:* W. Wilbur Hatfield, 211 West Sixty-Eighth Street, Chicago, Illinois

*For Directors-at-Large:* (six to be elected)

Milton Zisowitz, Forest Hills High School, Forrest Hills, New York

Stirling Brown, Howard University, Washington, D. C.

William R. Wood, Evanston Township Schools, Evanston, Illinois

E. Louise Noyes, Santa Barbara High School, Santa Barbara, California

Mildred Dawson, Elementary Schools,

Kingston, New York

Blanche Trezevant, State Supervisor of English, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

In a *Language Arts Leaflet* published by the World Book Company, Mildred A. Dawson writes on "Language Readiness." In this leaflet she analyses each of the major phases of readiness in operation, maturation, preparation through experiences, and favorable attitudes. She emphasizes the fact that the teacher should keep in mind that her pupils will be ready for those activities and phases of skill that are appropriate for children of that particular age or maturation level. It is also pointed out that a skill introduced in the primary grades will need refinement, repetition, and reapplication at succeeding grade levels.

Miss Dawson directed the preparation of *A Course of Study in Language* for grades one to six which was recently published by the World Book Company.

From observation of what good teachers are doing in the field, the authors arrived at 10 general principles to be taken into account in building an effective language program.

1. Language teaching is a daylong activity.
2. The language program should be developed from the interests and experiences of the children.
3. The language program should take account of language needs in the other subjects.
4. Language skills are more readily learned and mastered in connection with interests and occasions that demand their use.
5. Grade placement of skills should take account of child maturation as well as of de-

<sup>1</sup>Miss Stewart, a teacher of English, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois.

mands for the use of these skills in normal situations that confront children at successive age and grade levels.

6. Oral language should be stressed.
7. The program should provide a few definite standards each year.
8. The tendency of children to imitate is an asset in the teaching of language.
9. The child should acquire the ability and tendency to appraise his own work.
10. The positive approach is desirable.

Conversation, discussion, story-telling, dramatization, letter writing, reports, choral speaking creative writing of prose and verse are the areas for language activity experiences suggested in the course of study.

The figurative language of common usage is the subject of an interesting article entitled "The Poetry of Everyday Language," by Henry I. Christ in the January *High Points*. The colorful metaphors and idiom of everyday language are suggested as a starting point for teaching the processes of effective communication.

*Art Education Today*, published by Teachers College, Columbia University, emphasizes the "importance of the art process to the individual" rather than to the end product. This publication marks the post-war resumption of the magazine which was suspended in 1943. The articles observe the "marked shift" in art teaching, so that now a primary concern is the development of the individual through art experiences.

A report presented by Professor Allison Davis of the University of Chicago at the San Francisco meeting of the American Association of School Administrators blasted a long accepted doctrine on the subject of I. Q's.

The customary intelligence tests, which educators have assumed valid, have shown that children in low-income groups have, on the whole, a lower intelligence quotient than children in the upper economic brackets.

Prof. Davis reported that experiments he and his co-workers recently conducted at Chicago have shown that children, aged 6 to 8, of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers have an average intelligence equal to that of the children of professional groups. The study found differences between individuals but no differences between socio-economic groups.

If the Chicago study holds up under further analysis, many of the accepted principles of the school program based on the present interpretation of the intelligence tests will have to be seriously revised.

In a radio Youth Forum discussion on "How Much Freedom Should Children Be Given?" conducted by six junior high school children from New York City schools, one young participant won applause when she declared, "Children should have a say about somethings. Sometimes we can be right too."

About one individual in five hundred presents an extreme reading problem that requires *remedial* instruction given individually or in very small groups, according to a statement by Emmett Albert Betts.

The more common reading difficulties can be solved by good systematic reading instruction—beginning at the individual's own reading level—which may be provided by means of group *corrective* instruction.

Pupils who have difficulty with reading usually have a number of problems. Four causes of common reading difficulties treated in his article "Basic Reading Practices" (Winter, 1948 *Visual Digest*) are:

1. Attempts to read material that is too difficult.  
Too many different words.  
Too many different and highly abstract concepts.
2. Attempts to read material that is uninteresting
3. Lack of a necessary background of information to deal with the concepts presented.
4. Inadequate word recognition skills.

For all kinds of reading instruction, Mr. Betts emphasizes the necessity of the teacher's knowing the pupil's readability level.

In addition to symptoms and causes of reading problems, the article discusses reading tests and inventories, suggestions for group instruction, and warns against pitfalls to be avoided for group instruction in corrective reading.

Reprints of the article may be ordered from Janet L. Hayes, Secretary, The Reading Clinic, Department of Psychology, Temple University, Philadelphia 22, Pa.

Another reprint which can be ordered from the same source "Readability: Its Application to the Elementary School" is 60 cents a copy.

An article in January *High Points* by Rose Klein, Junior High School 252, suggests some "Morale Builders" for teachers of seventh grade pupils. To promote interest in each other and in their work and classroom, she suggests a social committee of pupils. In one group a boy and girl talented in English and drawing were chosen by pupils for a committee to keep track of birthdays, make up original designs and sayings to be sent to each pupil on his birthday. Different committees send appropriate cards for other events.

Among the procedures for class work she suggests that home work assignments be individualized. "Let the pupils plan *what* they are going to do, *how* they are going to do it, and

give a fairly good reason *why* they are going to do this." This last suggestion might be applied to almost any undertaking or project in which pupils are involved.

On Houghton Mifflin's announcement of children's books for spring is an attractive illustration from Laura Bannon's *Billy and the Bear*. Extra copies of the picture will be mailed to anyone who would like them.

*The Good School* is the eighth in a series of bulletins for teachers, prepared under the direction of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction of the Maine State Department of Education.

Written by a group of elementary in-service teachers, the bulletin seeks to help individual teachers develop a good school for individual children. In an informal manner, it treats of the teacher's responsibilities to herself and her pupils; her understanding of the home, the community, the school, and her fellow-teachers.

One section deals with the characteristics of the children and the educational implications inherent in them, while another chapter is a "treasure chest," designed to answer questions common to teachers in the modern school.

The concise bibliography contains a wealth of material in book and periodical form for pupils, as well as lists of good professional bulletins for the teachers.

The bulletin is free to Maine teachers and to others it is 75 cents a copy. Order from Division Curriculum and Instruction, State Department, Augusta, Maine.

Teachers in Phoenix, Arizona schools who hold the point of view that improved human relations and increased democratic activities have resulted in improved mental health among the students, have published the bulletin *Organizing the Classroom for Mental Health*.

Suggestions for procedures and evaluation



of classroom conditions with illustrations and applications are discussed under the five topic headings:

1. Mental health has its best chance in the democratic classroom.
2. The mental health needs of individuals differ.
3. Teaching contributes to mental health as it provides for these individual needs.
4. Appropriate socializing activities are planned to help the shy individual.
5. The teacher promotes mental health through his own personal adjustment.

The bulletin is 25 cents. Order from Phoenix Union High Schools and Phoenix College, Phoenix, Arizona.

The Anti-Defamation League has prepared a catalogue entitled "Materials on Intergroup Relations" which lists all materials available from the national office. The catalogue and materials may be obtained from Anti-Defamation League, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, New York.

The New York Herald Tribune Children's Spring Festival Awards for 1949 as follows: For Younger Children, Prize Winner: *Bonnie Bess*, The Weathervane Horse, by Alvin Tresselt, Lothrop. Honor Books: *Hodie* by Katharine and Bernard Garbutt, Alladin; *Sonny-Boy Sim* by Elizabeth W. Baker, Rand McNally; *The Little Cowboy* by Margaret Wise Brown, William R. Scott; *Susie The Cat* by Tony Palazzo, Viking. For Middle-Aged Children, Prize Winner: *Bush Holiday* by Stephen Fennimore Doubleday. Honor Books: *Sea Boots* by Robert C. DuSoe, Longmans; *A Sundae With Judy* by Frieda Friedman, Morrow; *Movie Shoes* by Noel Streatfeild, Random; *At The Palace Gates* by Helen Rand Parish, Viking. For Older Children, Prize Winner: *Start Of The Trail*, The Story of a Young Maine Guide, by Louise Dickinson Rich, Lippincott; *Albert Einstein* by Elma Ehrlich Levinger, Messner; *Son Of The Valley*

by John R. Tunis, Morrow; *Tree of Freedom* by Rebecca Caudill, Viking; *Song of the Pines* by Walter and Marion Havighurst, Winston.

The Book Evaluation Committee of the Children's Library Association has selected fourteen distinguished children's books of 1948. They are: *An Inheritance of Poetry*, by Gladys Adshead and Annis Duff. Decorations by Nora Unwin. Houghton Mifflin; *Story of the Negro*, by Arna Bontemps. Illustrated by Raymond Lufkin. Knopf; *Grandfather Tales*, by Richard Chase. Illustrated by Berkeley Williams, Jr. Houghton Mifflin; *My Father's Dragon*, by Ruth Stiles Gannett. Illustrated by Ruth Chrisman Gannett. Random House; *Vulpes the Red Fox*, by John George and Jean George. Illustrated by Jean George. Dutton; *The Doll's House*, by Rumer Godden. Illustrated by Dana Saintsbury. Viking; *King of the Wind*, by Marguerite Henry. Illustrated by Wesley Dennis. Rand McNally; *Seabird*, by Holling C. Holling. Illustrated by the author. Houghton Mifflin; *Blueberries for Sal*, by Robert McCloskey. Illustrated by the author. Viking; *All around the Town*, by Phyllis McGinley. Illustrated by Helen Stone. Lippincott; *Daughter of the Mountain*, by Louise Rankin. Illustrated by Kurt Wiese. Viking; *American Folk Songs for Children*, by Ruth Seeger. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Doubleday; *The Chestry Oak*, by Kate Seredy. Illustrated by the author. Viking; *In Norway*, by Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen. Illustrated by Eyvind Earle. Viking.

The list, which is accompanied by annotations, is available from the Library Division, Sturgis Printing Co., Box 329, Sturgis, Michigan, at 500 for \$5; 1,000 for \$7.50; 2,500 for \$15. Members of the Committee are: Katherine Porter, Chairman, Isabella Jinnette, Elizabeth Johnson, Helen Kinsey, Elizabeth McCombs.

The 1948 Newberry Medal for "The Most Distinguished Contribution to American Literature for Children," *King of the Wind* (Rand

McNally) was awarded to Marguerite Henry of Wayne, Illinois. Wesley Dennis was the illustrator. The Caldecott Medal, for the most distinguished picture book for children during 1948 was given to Berta and Elmer Hader for the artistic merit of their book, *The Big Snow* (Macmillan). The 1949 awards will be made at the Midwest Regional Conference of the American Library Association in Grand Rapids, Michigan, November 9-12.

The American Library Association, which has adopted an excellent "Library Bill of Rights", expects to gain further publicity for its work against censorship through the newly organized National Council for Free Expression, according to a recent issue of the A. L. A. *Bulletin*. Elmer Rice, playwright, is chairman of the Council, which was created to coordinate the work of agencies, organizations, groups, and individuals whose interests are affected by censorship problems.

Thirteen staff members of the Los Angeles County Public Library, according to the same issue of the *Bulletin*, may soon be subject to discharge for insubordination, because of their failure to reveal information called for in Part D of the Loyalty Oath Form. Part D lists 140

organizations and requires that the employee indicate whether or not he is a member of them. The 13 librarians face immediate release unless the California Supreme Court accepts the case for review.

Here are the Junior Literary Guild selections for the month of May, 1949. For boys and girls 6, 7, and 8 years of age: *Song of the Swallows*, by Leo Politi. Charles Scribner's Sons, \$2.00; for boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years of age: *The Bartletts of Box B. Ranch*, by Camilla Campbell. Whittlesey House, \$2.25; for older girls, 12 to 16 years of age: *The Seventh Step: Mystery at Cedarhead*, by Helen Girvan. Rinehart & Company, \$2.25; for older boys, 12 to 16 years of age: *The Purple Tide*, by Leland Silliman. John Winston Company, \$2.50.

The review of *Roads to Anywhere. Beacon Lights of Literature*, by Marquis E. Shattuck, Iroquois Publishing Company, in the March *Elementary English* (page 174), stated that the list price was \$.96. The list price should have been \$2.12.

The first National Conference on American Folklore for Children will be held at Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana, June 29-July 1, 1949.

### VALIDITY OF SELF-EVALUATION CHARTS

(Continued from Page 280)

tive tests shows that he has clearly surpassed, or consistently maintained, the speeds indicated in Table I, a standardized examination may be given with reasonable assurance that he will at least achieve the norm for his grade. A detailed study of fifty cases, retested after intervals of three to ten months subsequent to the completion of work in the developmental reading program showed that the students who had

reported satisfactory progress on their reading charts, and achieved the norms for their grades on the final test before leaving the program, either maintained their newly acquired skills in reading or continued to improve.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Thornton C. Blayne, "Retention of Skills Acquired in Developmental Reading Programs," *School and Society*, Jan. 12, 1946, pp. 37-39.

## Review and Criticism

[The brief reviews in this issue are by Frances Rees, Margaret Skiff, Helen R. Sattley, Celia B. Stendler, Margaret Hampel, Bernardine G. Schmidt, Dorothy E. Smith, Hannah M. Lindahl, Kathryn E. Hodapp, Mary E. Kier, Jean Gardiner Smith, Jean Ruth Jones, and Latourette Stockwell. Unsigned annotations are by the editor.]

### *For the Teacher*

*The Teaching of English in Schools.* Edited for the English Association by Vivian de Sola Pinto. Macmillan (London), \$2.75.

This symposium, which includes ten papers by distinguished British writers and teachers, will be of interest to those who wish to compare English and American viewpoints on the teaching of literature, speech, writing, and grammar. Thoroughly readable, challenging, and informative. Designed chiefly for teachers at the secondary level.

*Education for International Understanding in American Schools: Suggestions and Recommendations.* By the Committee on International Relations of the National Education Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Council for the Social Studies. Published by the National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

After discussing the need for world-mindedness, the Committee describes the objectives of international education, the marks of the world-minded American, a school program for the development of international understanding, along with specific learning experiences, and possible aids and sources for the teacher. A timely and thought-provoking volume.

*Reading in Modern Education.* By Paul Witty. D. C. Heath, \$3.50.

A new volume on reading, a field on which so much has been written, should have much to commend it. Dr. Witty's new book meets this requirement. It is not a massive book—it contains but 319 pages—and it is not packed with the minutiae of reading research. It does, however, provide excellent summaries of recent investigations on important problems in reading, and, above all it is practical and readable.

After reviewing briefly the history and present emphases in reading instruction. Dr. Witty describes the role of interest and motive in reading, which he so consistently stressed in earlier days when the literature on reading was preoccupied with the skills aspects of the process. An analysis of the factor of reading readiness and discussions of vocabulary growth and development, the role of children's books, the developmental phases of reading, remedial work with high school students, evaluation in reading case studies of retarded readers, and the prospects for reading instruction then appear in order. The book contains excellent bibliographies and a wealth of information about sources of materials for the teacher of reading. Throughout, the problem of reading instruction is considered in close relation to the broader developmental tasks of children and youth. Teachers in all subjects, supervisors, and guidance workers will find the volume a most valuable aid.

### *For Early Adolescents*

*Moby Dick.* By Herman Melville. Adapted by Verne B. Brown. Illustrated by Seymour Fleishman. Scott, Foresman.

The text of Melville's story has here been adapted and simplified in the hope of luring the young reader to an enjoyment of this classic.

The long descriptions and philosophical passages have been shortened or omitted entirely, and the vocabulary simplified. (It is now fifth grade.) As a result, the main plot certainly is easier to grasp and to follow. This reviewer, brought up on the original, in the days when young people cut their intellectual teeth on meat considerably tougher than comic books and radio serials, found it emaciated. However, to be fair to the purpose of the editor and publishers in the light of the problems of today's English teachers, she gave it to an average twelve year old boy to read for opinion. He pronounced it "pretty good," but it was perfectly patent from his conversation that to him it just another "boy's book," and that he was completely unaware that he had been reading a classic!

L. T. S.

*Told Under the Christmas Tree.* Selections Chosen by the Literature Committee of the Association for Childhood Education. Illustrated by Maud and Miska Petersham, Macmillan, \$3.00.

This is another "Umbrella book." It is a delightful collection of Christmas stories and poems, both old and new, from every corner of the world, describing the customs and traditions of Christmas. Some of the most interesting are to be found in that sizeable section of the book devoted to tales of the Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, which falls near the Christmas season. For ages 8-12.

L. T. S.

*The Royal Game: Chess for Young People.* By Edith Lucie Weart. Illustrated by B. Brussel-Smith. Vanguard, \$2.50.

This colorful little book describes in simple, personalized language the elements of the ancient game which is attracting so many young people today.

*Pennyweather Luck.* By Margaret Ann Hubbard. Macmillan, \$2.50.

A vivid, colorful picture of the life of a family in a shanty town between the levee and

the Mississippi near New Orleans is combined with a well-developed mystery to make an exciting, fast-moving story. Family relations at their best are exemplified by the Pennyweathers, a large, hard-working family who have learned the secret of cheerful cooperation and making the best out of a little in their struggles to cope with the whimsies of the Old Father Mississippi. The reader will find the Pennyweather children rather stereotyped characters, but other characters such as Baddy Boy, the child of the swamps; Miz Pumpkinseed, who's a little "tetched in the head," and the temperamental Mr. Pennyweather are real people. Mr. Doc, a newcomer to the levee, serves as interpreter of river life. Flood, tornado, and a description of the Mardi Gras bring out the flavor of the region and add to the excitement of the story. Undoubtedly the author has idealized life on the Mississippi levee; nevertheless she has shown a sympathetic insight into some of the problems a river family must face.

J. R. J.

*On Wings of Cheer.* By Sam Campbell. Bobbs Merrill, \$2.50.

Here is a book which should win the heart of every reader of junior high-school age and above. Sam Campbell, warm-hearted "Philosopher of the Forest," has revealed a deep love of both man and nature in his description of a year in the North Woods of Wisconsin with his wife Ginny and wise young friend Hi-Bub. Children will enjoy meeting the many interesting inhabitants of the forest—Cheer, the red-winged blackbird; Specks, the fawn; Charley, the incorrigible bear; Little John Deerfoot, Hi-Bub's imaginary friend, and many others. Older readers will appreciate Mr. Campbell's sympathetic portrayal of the child Hi-Bub and the philosophical comments Mr. Campbell makes on nature and man.

This book should make a good stepping stone to other nature and animal stories. Excellent illustrations add to the appeal of the book.



The format is attractive and the print large and inviting. *On Wings of Cheer* can be especially recommended for average and above-average seventh and eighth grade readers, slow high school readers with an interest in nature, and for all readers who have an appreciation of nature, children, and people in general.

J. R. J.

*Dusty of the Double Seven.* By Graham M. Dean. Illustrated by John Mariani. Viking, \$2.00.

A story of contemporary life on a Nevada cattle ranch, which lacks neither adventure nor color because it is authentic and about today instead of yesterday. The two main characters are returned veterans of the Fighting First Marine Division. They are confronted not only with the arduous work of a big and busy ranch, but also with the old problems of land greed and cattle rustling. They use modern methods to help solve both. For example, airplanes are used for regular range patrol, for tracking desperadoes, for emergency ambulances, and for fire fighting. But the yarn also includes excellent, authoritative descriptions of a calf roundup, branding, haying, and the activities of modern cowboys and Indians. The black and white illustrations add greatly to the attractiveness of the text.

L. T. S.

*Kidnapped.* By Robert Louis Stevenson. Illustrated by Lynd Ward. Illustrated by Junior Library. Grosset and Dunlap, \$3.00.

*The Little Lame Prince, and The Adventures of a Brownie.* By Dinah Marie Mulock Craik. Illustrated by Lucille Corcos. Illustrated by Junior Library. Grosset and Dunlap, \$2.00.

Two children's favorites in the extremely attractive Junior Library edition.

*The Great Venture.* By T. Morris Longstreth. Illustrated by G. and D. Hauman. Macmillan, \$2.50.

First, it was a turnip which so nearly re-

sembled a frog and then the unforgettable image of a wild wounded deer which were to launch young Dan French on his career as one of America's greatest sculptors.

Morris T. Longstreth has presented in convincing, readable style an account of the first eight years in the training of this young sculptor, climaxed in his commission for the famous statue of the "Minute Man," at the age of about twenty-three.

Equally alive is the background of Concord, Massachusetts, of the 1870's with the Ralph Waldo Emersons, the Alcotts, Richard Dana and William Brewster. These were the staunch friends and severest critics who with French's own family shared in his career as a sculptor and in the unfolding of the character of the youth himself. Young people from twelve to sixteen will find *The Great Venture* stimulating and challenging.

F. R.

### *For the Middle Grades*

*Whitepaw Goes North.* By David Grew. David McKay, \$2.50.

Whitepaw is a yellow haired dog, part collie, about whom the author has written previously in *The Wild Dog of Edmonton*. In this volume, Whitepaw is shanghaied into an arctic bound dog pack. Dwight, his master, is a newsboy in a Canadian outpost. The story revolves about his search for his dog, which takes him far into the reaches of the Northland and so permits the author to describe modern pioneering explorations into the arctic, scientific experiments, the planning of future airways, the Mounties at work Esquimo life, seal hunting, and many other things which will interest boys 10-13.

L. T. S.

*The Rainbow Book of Bible Stories: The Old and New Testaments.* Edited with an introduction by May Lamberton Becker. Illustrated by Hilda Van Stockum. World Publishing Company, \$1.25.

The great narratives of the Bible are here

retold as a series of short stories, in simple and reverent though vivid style. The sequence follows the chronology of the Bible.

*Red Embers.* By Dorothy Lyons. Illustrated by Wesley Dennis. Harcourt, Brace, \$2.50.

Red Embers is the favorite mount of a young girl who trains polo ponies and plays such an excellent game that she gains a coveted position on the All-American women's polo team. The story has considerable suspense, good descriptions of life on a California ranch and how ponies and their riders are conditioned, as well as exciting accounts of games played. For girls 10-13. (Boys probably would like it too, if they once got into it!) L. T. S.

*Peachtree Island.* By Mildred Lawrence. Illustrated by Mary Stevens. Harcourt Brace, \$2.25.

For once Cissie wished desperately that she were a boy. She had loved Peachtree Island the instant she arrived to spend a year with Uncle Eben after living alternately with three aunts. Then she heard Uncle Eben say that if she had been a boy he would keep her permanently. But Uncle Eben did not know Cissie.

How this nine-year-old girl became indispensable in the lives of this uncle, his housekeeper and the neighbors will make fascinating reading for youngsters of Cissie's age.

Mildred Lawrence's firsthand knowledge of peach culture and her ability to make it exciting, as well as her keen insight into the ways of children, are reflected in this warmhearted story. F. R.

*The House on the River.* By Charlotte Baker. Coward-McCann, \$2.50.

The most exciting of all the many homes Davy had had was the houseboat on the Wilamette River. Helen and Ellen Llewellyn, who use big words in the wrong places, "Rancid" Weeks, and McDermit, the Hermit, become his friends. The adventures of the children include

getting lost on an island, meeting a hermit, and winning a motor at the Pet Show. Pleasant, easy reading for eight to ten year-olds. M. S.

*Augustus and the Desert.* By LeGrand. Bobbs-Merrill, \$2.00.

This time the inimitable Augustus and his family head for the deserts of Arizona. With their usual flair for adventure, they manage to fall in with an old prospector and discover a gold mine. Augustus saves the mine by capturing the villain who was flooding it.

Like the others in this series, this story has a broad humor, lively illustration, and picturesque language. There is nothing stuffy about Pop or Ma, who love adventure as much as the "kids." Fun for eight to twelve year-olds. M. S.

*Horses and How to Draw Them.* By Amy Hogeboom Vanguard Press, \$1.50.

This will be the most popular book of the "How to draw it" series. There is the usual good photograph of the animal with the opposite page of text about it for nine types of horses. Variety is introduced into the drawing instructions by showing horses in different action poses. As drawing is not taught children this way, by the use of circles and different shapes and lines, the chief purpose of the book is entertainment. M. S.

*By Secret Railway.* By Enid L. Meadowcraft. Illustrated by Henry C. Pitz. Crowell, \$3.00.

One of the finest of this author's fine historical stories for 4th to 7th graders. Chicago, a booming shipping town in 1860, was also a refuge for Southern Negroes. They were not always safe, however, as David learned when he met Jim, a young free Negro from Kentucky. The friendship between the two boys took David on a perilous trip to Missouri, then home via the underground railway and eventual safety to Jim. This story of how Jim is taken naturally and lovingly into the circle of a very likeable family is an important picture of equality.

"Hurra!" yelled David... "Jim's staying! Move over. Move over, everybody. We've got to make a place for Jim."

"Yes," agreed Grandfather, smiling at the boys. "We must all move over and make a place for Jim."  
H. R. S.

*Number Eleven Poplar Street.* By Frances Fitzpatrick Wright. Illustrated by Margaret Ayer. Abingdon-Cokesbury, \$1.50.

Why should the kind lady on the train suddenly stiffen as Judy told her she was on her way to spend a month with Aunt Maria at Number Eleven Poplar Street? And why in the world should two houses on the same street have number eleven? and why was that high hedge and tall fence separating them?

Youngsters, nine to twelve, will live every minute of Judy's exciting experiences from the moment she leaves her home in the country. There are the first pangs of homesickness in Aunt Maria's austere home, Judy's discovery of a mystery surrounding her aunt and her neighbors, the excitement of honest-to-goodness music lessons, and the making of new friends until the day when the mystery is solved and Judy's visit is over.

A convincing story by Frances Fitzpatrick Wright of smalltown misunderstandings and of the way "a small child shall lead them" into solutions of these problems. Margaret Ayer's appealing illustrations will add greatly to the enjoyment of the story.  
F. R.

*American Folk Songs for Children.* By Ruth Crawford Seeger. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Doubleday & Company, 1948.

In a preface to this important book Carl Sandburg says, "Ruth Seeger's songbook is no sudden notion. It represents many years of a rare mother living with her music and her children. Her collection embodies an extraordinary array of tune-tested songs for little ones, many of them so old they have been forgotten and now have the freshness of the new."

Mrs. Seeger has truly done a remarkable job of collecting from all corners of America folk songs for children. Each one of these songs has been tried out not only with her own family but at Silver Spring Cooperative Nursery School of Silver Spring, Maryland. Old favorites like "Pawpaw Patch," "Jim Crack Corn," "Skip to my Lou," "This Old Man" are included in this collection as well as countless familiar but equally delightful tunes.

But to describe Mrs. Seeger's book as merely a collection of folk songs is to do it a grave injustice. Mrs. Seeger has prefaced the collection with chapters on the use of these songs with children both at home and at school. She describes how these songs can be used while children are working or playing, how to improvise on the words, how the songs carry over into the home, and how the songs should be taught to children in school. She also includes suggestions for rhythmic and dramatic play after each of the songs. Her advice is sensible and practical and her enthusiasm for the art is contagious. Delightful illustrations by Barbara Cooney are entirely in keeping with the spirit of the book.

The collection is grouped under such headings as "outdoors," "Animals, Birds and Insects," "Color, Clothing, Food, Home," "Work, Hammers, Trains, Boats," "Quilt Songs" and the like. Classified indices and an index of song titles and first lines aid in the easy location of material.

Elementary teachers who are looking for fresh song material to revitalize music programs made deadly by songs about the postman, the fireman, and the like will eagerly welcome this book. As Mrs. Seeger says, "(This) is not a specially prepared baby food, strained and predigested, and administered with an almost unavoidable element of condescension by adults and older brothers and sisters. It need not be discarded along with the kiddy car and the tricycle. Songs like these are sung by all ages. They are family stuff."  
C. B. S.

*For Younger Children*

*Walt Disney's Dumbo of the Circus.* Retold by Dorothy Walter Baruch. Illustrations by the Walt Disney Studio Adapted by Melvin Shaw. D. C. Heath, \$1.12.

The story of a baby elephant with ears so large that he almost develops an inferiority complex until he discovers he can use them in such a manner as to be able to fly. Illustrations are in strong primary colors. Fifth in a series of thirteen Walt Disney story books listed in order of difficulty. For ages 5-6. M. E. K.

*Big Farmer Big and Little Farmer Little.* By Kathryn and Byron Johnson, Pictures by Feodor Rojankovsky. Simon and Schuster.

In format, a tall book about Big Farmer Big contains a pocket into which fits a tiny book about Little Farmer Little, both with full color pictures. These two stories are more fanciful than factual, with the fancy definitely strained and not particularly original. Swift, for example, did the same kind of thing much better in *Gulliver's Travels*. But no doubt some children aged 3-6 will enjoy them. L. T. S.

*The Half-Pint Jinni and Other Stories.* By Maurice Dolbier. Illustrated by Allan Thomas. Random House, \$2.50.

Eight delightfully imaginative and entertaining stories of events which took place during the undated years of enchantment when Baghdad was one of the wonders of the world. Well printed and illustrated in black and white. For children of any age who like fairy tales.

L. T. S.

*Here Am I.* By Nell Reppy. Rand McNally, \$.75.

Full-page pictures of the toddling boy and his daily activities. Four word sentences, in first person, explain each picture in this colorful cloth book. A good "first book" for the toddler.

M. E. K.

*Little Peewee or, Now Open the Box.* By Dorothy Kunhardt. Pictures by J. P. Miller.

*The Seven Sneezes.* By Olga Cabral. Pictures by Tibor Gergely.

*Circus Time.* By Marion Conger. Pictures by Gerely.

*Walt Disney's Bambi.*

*Walt Disney's Pinocchio.* Simon and Schuster, 25 cents each.

The name Golden Books has become so popular that they speak for themselves. These five Little Golden Books are excellent little books for the money. The first three are humorous with easy stories and colorful illustrations. The last two are colorful but not a substitute for the original stories. M. E. K.

*Thidwick the Big Hearted Moose.* By Dr. Seuss. Illustrated by the Author. Random House, \$2.00.

Thidwick was on his way to the edge of Lake Winna-Bango to munch moose-moss when Bingle-Bug called out

"It's such a long road  
And it's such a hot day,  
Would you mind if I rode  
On your horns for a way?"

Thidwick, being too big hearted to refuse so light a bug, said "Of course not!"

The consequences he did not expect and did not deserve as Thidwick attempted to practice the rule "a host, first of all, must be nice to his guests." The story in rhyme reaches a hilarious climax as Thidwick's guests include besides Bingle-Bug all his friends and the friends' friends, among them a bob cat, a bear, a fox, and four squirrels, to say nothing of three hundred and sixty-two bees.

Thidwick's own moose-natured solution to his dilemma brings the story to a rollicking conclusion. Dr. Seuss fans, young and old, will have a jolly time with *Thidwick, the Big Hearted Moose*. Children perhaps will not catch the satire so apparent to adults, but will not miss any of the fun of pictures or-text. F. R.



*Number Men.* By Louise True. Illustrated by Lillian Owen. Children's Press, \$1.00.

Simple verses and drawings attempt to show children how to write figures from *one* to *ten*. The monkey's tail suggests the figure "6", for example. It is unfortunate that all the drawings are not so good as the picture of the snowman and the ducks. The illustrations of children are very crude and wooden. This is not in a class with CHICKEN LITTLE COUNT-TO-TEN.

M. S.

*Is it Hard? Is it Easy?* By Mary McBurney Green. Illustrated by Lucienne Bloch. William R. Scott.

Written for pre-school children, *Is It Hard? Is It Easy?* is a story of Ann and Tim who can each do certain things. Ann finds it easy to skip, but Tim can't skip at all. Tim can tie bow knots, however, but bow-knots are hard for Ann, and so it goes. There is a nice little moral lesson, as well as good mental hygiene, involved in this story which gets across very effectively the notion that what is hard for one person may be easy for another. Furthermore, some things may be hard for all young children, and some things may be easier done in pairs. The stiff, roughly textured paper will be interesting for the young child to manipulate. The large, clear print is excellent for the primary-grade child who will enjoy reading this book for himself.

C. B. S.

*Little Old Automobile.* Written and illustrated by Marie Hall Ets. Viking, \$1.50.

The story of *Little Old Automobile* is a delightfully written tale which successfully capitalizes on many of the elements which appeal to the young reader. It tells simply and with the repetition threes to eights love of a little old car which meets obstacle after obstacle on the road, each of which requests that the auto wait until the obstacle gets out of his way. But Little Old Automobile won't. Each time he knocks the obstacle out of his path and pursues his merry way. But each time the obstacle gets bigger and bigger and the climax is carefully

built up until the Little Old Automobile tackles a big black engine and meets his doom. Young children will delight in the naughtiness of the car as he answers the request of the frog, the rabbit, the cow and the woman to wait, "No! I don't want to! I don't want to and I won't!" But they will also like the security the tale offers by having right triumph in the end.

C. B. S.

*Country Fireman.* By Jerrold Beim. Illustrated by Leonard Shortall. William Morrow.

Teachers who work with primary children will welcome copies of *Country Fireman* with their bright red jackets and large clear cut print. Children who live in the country will have a story of the drama of every day service of volunteer firemen in their own neighborhoods and city children may long to be Ricky, the boy in the country who wanted to be a fireman and who finally rode on the big red engine in the Fourth of July parade.

M. H.

*Ethan, the Shepherd Boy.* By Georgiana Dorcas Ceder. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, \$2.00.

With present-day interests in Palestine, this story of children in the years just before Christ has a particular application. It is a tale leading up to the first Christmas, told in language and style to interest the child of the middle grades, and to make it meaningful to him. Illustrations are soft, beautiful, black-and-whites, and are most artistically placed. It is a gentle book, in style, in language and in artistry.

B. G. S.

*U. S. Means Us.* By Mina Turner. Illustrated by Lloyd Coe. Houghton Mifflin, \$1.50.

This book is for children in first, second, and third grades. In simple language it tells about the offices of President, Congress, and the Supreme court. The colored illustrations help to explain the text. Being bound in cloth it will stand the hard wear of school and public libraries.

D. E. S.

*The Winter Noisy Book.* By Margaret Wise Brown. Pictures by Charles G. Shaw. William R. Scott, \$1.35.

The very young child will be attracted to this book because of its colorful pictures and its simple story of a little dog named Muffin whose sharp ears heard all the sounds of winter. Almost every time the child turns the page, he will meet Muffin in an illustration or in the narrative. By the time the book is closed, Muffin is closed, Muffin is a real friend.

H. M. L.

*Watch the Birdie.* Story and pictures by Phyllis Rowand. William R. Scott, \$1.35.

The humor in both the pictures and the narrative in this book will appeal to older children as well as to young children. Mother's attempts and Father's efforts to take a picture of the baby are completely frustrated until Grandmother arrives. It was Grandmother's hat that finally brought success to the undertaking of photographing the baby.

H. M. L.

*A Little Book of Singing Graces.* Collected by Jeanette Perkins Brown. Pictures by Lloyd Dotterer. Abingdon Cokesbury Press, \$.50. Delightful book of singing graces.

Illustrations are excellent. Paper binding for home use but well worth the price. K. E. H.

*See The Bear.* By Dean Bryant. Rand McNally, \$.75.

Another colorful cloth book for the toddler. The full-page pictures and the simple text helps the child recognize the first objects that are to become part of his early vocabulary.

M. E. K.

*Tall Tales.* By A. S. Artley and Lillian Gray, and William S. Gray, Reading Director. Illustrations by Constance Moran. Scott, Foresman, \$1.36.

This is primarily a text book to be used in the third grade. An interesting group of stories scientifically compiled for strengthening reading ability.

M. E. K.

*Cinderella.* Retold by Esther Meeks. Illustrated by Doris Stolberg. Wilcox and Follett, \$.60.

An old favorite retold in an appealing manner. The colorful illustrations portray the feeling of this well known story. The print is particularly attractive. Ages 5-8

M. E. K.

*The Seven Little Elephants.* By William Hall. Pictures by Fini. Crowell, \$1.50.

Of dubious value either for teaching the days of the week or for the delight in a circus story, the book is a prosy account of how the elephants learned their own names and the order in which they came so that children might learn the days of the week when they went to the circus.

J. G. S.

*Peter and Patrick.* By Dudley Morris. Putnam's, \$1.50.

"Peter and Patrick sat under a tree, Thinking of things that they'd like to be." That's how the story starts, and then Mr. Morris in his delightful pictures and verses goes on to tell what some of their day dreams are. For children up to six or seven.

L. T. S.

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Why the quotes? Except for a change in format the above is a complete and verbatim quotation from the *Catholic Library World* (Nov. '48). Others who praised this book include: *Elementary English*, *School Library Bulletin* (NYC), *School Management*, and *Guidance*.

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